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CALIFORNIA

THE LIFE
OF
EDMUND KEAN.

By W. Porter

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LONDON:
EDWARD MOXON, DOVER STREET.

MDCCCXXV.

TO THE
ABBOT

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INTRODUCTION.

THE life of a player is, assuredly, not the most important thing in the world. Nevertheless, it may be made amusing, and even useful in its way, if the vivacity of the writer or the misdeeds of his hero are sufficiently great. In biography, luckily, the aristocratic value goes for nothing. It enlightens neither the author nor his subject. A writer may be as lively in a threadbare suit, as though he were hedged in by ermine. And whether his hero be old or young, rich or poor, a lord or a lacquey, need give him no anxiety whatever. It is enough if he be witty himself, or the cause of amusement to others.

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We do not presume to be wits ourselves. We acknowledge that we feel the weight of our undertaking. There are few tasks, indeed, in literature, more difficult we think, than the biography of a celebrated man. Independently of the acuteness necessary in ordinary cases to detect and explain the niceties of character, some judgment is required to determine the circle of events, amidst which he should be made to move; avoiding, on the one hand, too meagre an outline of personal history, as insufficient to show the extent of his influence; and forbearing, on the other, to diminish his due importance, by an accumulation of facts, to which he bears but a remote relation.

The biographer, moreover, has few of those glittering materials to deal with, which go far to make up the splendour of the historian's work. He has necessarily fewer cha-

racters, and far less variety of circumstance to relieve and set off his labours. There is almost always a sameness in the events which he has to recount ; for his hero is either a philosopher or a soldier, a statesman or a poet, or a man remarkable in science or art ; seldom combining even two of those characters, excepting in the instances of Xenophon and Cæsar.

If it be said that all this is not so formidable as it appears ; that an indifferent subject (like a bad cause at Nisi Prius) gives ampler scope to the ingenuity of the advocate ; and that genius delights in accomplishing something for itself,—in raising or creating ; we admit that this is in some sort true. And yet, this very necessity of “ accomplishing something,” is an argument in favour of what we urge. Could we be content indeed, merely to blot down on foolscap, the dull doings of a lord of the bedchamber, or send our readers to sleep

with the achievements of some solemn editor (one of the ferrets of learning), who has abolished in triumph at least a score commas in Shakspeare or Chaucer, or misinterpreted Homer anew,—why, the thing might be a matter of indifference; but we have no such malicious designs against them. Our subject is altogether different; and our desire is to touch lightly, (agreeably if we can,) and impartially, upon the principal events of our hero's life. We have, however, no further ambitious hopes, or even wishes. We desire that the course of our narrative should be remembered (if remembered at all), not for its sudden starts and contrasts or imposing sounds, but for its easy and natural current. We are not about to traverse rocky declivities, or the savage wilderness, but a country that is familiar to us all.

And now, we invite the reader to ramble a little with us on the skirts of the theatrical region, before he enters “for good and all,”

(for good we hope,) upon the little history before him. It may form at once our introduction and apology.

Formerly, the deeds of actors were of some moment. Society was proud of these pleasant mimics. They were no longer (as they had been in rude times) wanderers over the land; no longer "vagabonds," grimacing for their barley bread in barns and alehouses. They had become stationary; they had risen to the rank of artists; they included in their roll, men of good manners, of good education, even of genius. Fashion followed them; the wits and high intellects of the time busied themselves with their merits; and they formed, upon the whole, a body well entitled to distinction and respect. For they unquestionably diffused more pleasure amongst all classes of men, than any other body of people whatsoever: and they materially influenced the progress of civilisation; improv-

the morals, and raising and giving refinement to the public taste.

Since those times, a century full of changes has swept over the play-going world. People have increased; luxuries have increased; books have increased: and now, alas! the theatre is little thought of. It has fallen on "evil days:" or else, it has contained within itself seeds of corruption, which have hurried it into premature decay. The rank and fashion of the country avoid it, as a place unsuited to noble tastes; the critics sneer at it; the people frequent it no longer. What is the cause, or rather what are the causes (for there are, we imagine, more than one), of its adversity, we are not sages enough to determine. But we think that we see, if not the origin of the evil, at least certain collateral reasons, why the benches of Covent Garden and Ancient Drury are now comparatively deserted.

First, there is "The Schoolmaster." *He* is abroad. He has entered even the walls of the theatre, and whisked away, with his "charming *rod*," hundreds of the gapers and gazers who formerly used to assemble there, to sharpen their wits or employ their leisure. These personages now sit quietly at home. They read newspapers, and journals, and magazines, and all the pretty duodecimos which that great mother of learning, "the Press," throws out daily, weekly, and monthly, from her ever-teeming bosom. They pick up, from this course of education, something "useful," as they think. And so they do; and so they would have done had they continued to frequent the neglected theatre. For the theatre is not barren of good. In its strength, (its "palmy days,") it is a grand and terrible instructor; and its influence might be extended beyond any point that it has ever yet attained in this country. I

might inculcate pressing and important truths; it might stimulate men to great actions; it might form,—opening its doors, as it does, night after night, and speaking, “trumpet-tongued,” to thousands of people,—a powerful and healthy resisting body, between the extremes of unprincipled faction and tyranny; exhibiting to each the value and beauty of “the golden mean,” which comprehends within its liberal limits all that is good and useful to human kind; all between “Croesus’ wealth, and Iru’s povertie.” The theatre might perhaps do this; but the licenser as yet hangs, like an incubus, upon it. His employment is to cut out words which mean nothing, and sentences innocent of evil. He cannot, indeed, altogether repress the vital energies of the drama; but he may materially retard its progress. For an author never can write well, if he write under the fear of a capricious or narrow-minded judge.

He is like a man with a log about his leg—he never can take a free or natural step : his speed is useless, his strength is of no avail. It is worth consideration, whether or not a licenser may not altogether be dispensed with ; leaving to the law, which is surely sufficient for the purpose, the task of repressing such exhibitions as are positively obnoxious to good taste, or even to “ good order,” and of punishing the person offending.

Nevertheless, the Drama, so long as a shadow of its worth remains, (and it *must* remain, and increase in value, if the public support it), is a school from which something may be learned, by all classes and kinds of men. It is a school, however, whose value and importance depend mainly on those who frequent it : for the theatre and the public act reciprocally on each other. The stage must rise in intellect, to satisfy a public that is intelligent ; and the public must ever derive new lights, new

thoughts, new pleasures, from the increasing intelligence of the stage. The Drama itself is generated in the public heart. Although it show itself upon the boards of a theatre, in a painted face and grotesque costume, it is itself essentially natural ; being wrought out and compounded of the passions and actions and characters of men. If it consist of anything else, it is perishable and bad. It may be poetry, or music ; it may exhibit the imagination, the folly, the wit of the author ; but it is "*The Drama*" no longer.

Another cause (not to pursue the question to tediousness) of the decay of the theatres, lies in the late hours devoted to amusement ; and a third in the vicious system of producing "Stars" upon the stage. We may possibly say a few words on this last mentioned subject hereafter. At present, let us proceed with our theme.

As we have observed, actors and acting

have gone out of repute. Yet, even in Kean's time, the subject had not wholly lost its interest. For the prosperity and accidents of his life became matters of public concern. Lords thronged his doors, during illness; presents flowed in upon him; newspapers were rich in anecdotes concerning him; the pit was full, to repletion; the boxes brilliant; the galleries wild with pleasure.

“ Was not this love, indeed ? ”

It is true, that our tragedian, in the course of time, declined from his zenith, and sank almost to the common level. But he *had* his day; he *had* his share of applause and sunshine;

(“ They can't but say he *had* the crown ; ”)

and this is all that man's admiration, however sincere, will ever render; all that man's vanity can ever hope to gain. Why should the actor mourn that the incense

burnt before him fades and is offered up no longer, when nothing, except Truth, is lasting?—when the conquests of heroes become lost and confounded in fables; when the inventor is merged in the invention; and the achievements of the poet are demolished by ignorance, or reduced to the limits of a vulgar song?—

The interest once felt regarding Kean, is still recent enough to serve as an apology to our undertaking, were any necessary. But, as we conceive, no apology is requisite. The actor himself is a fair subject for our pens. And we ourselves, albeit we do not arrogate to ourselves any precedence, have as good a right as others to try our luck with the public.

Our history, as the reader will observe, details little more than the events of our hero's life. Had his influence upon his art been great and lasting, we might have ex-

tended the circle of our inquiries. But no actor, we suspect, produces a permanent effect upon the stage. Some of his glory is caught and spread abroad for a time, by imitators (his satellites), but the light fades gradually away; and then another light succeeds,—to grow bright and expire in its turn. Kean, undoubtedly, gave an impulse to acting. His style was striking, and even original; and yet he did little, if anything, more than *restore* Nature to the stage. He infused new life into his art; but marred, as it is said, its dignity. Garrick did the same thing; and encountered the same accusation. When that great actor died, Mr. Kemble persuaded the stage to obey the old dynasty, until Kean, who was of the opposite faction, arose, and once more divided the opinions of the town. There seems always to have been this alternation

between the schools of Nature and Art, (if we may so term them), in the annals of the English theatre.

Let us look back a little. We are not about to fatigue the reader with a regular history of the stage ; but, before we bring our hero upon the London boards, and speak of his success there, it will be desirable to show briefly what its condition was, and what his predecessors had done there formerly. Kean owed, we sincerely believe, as little to the example of others, as any actor who ever appeared before the public. Yet he was by no means the only great actor, that the English stage has possessed. We even doubt whether he was the greatest. There were excellent tragedians before him,

“ Vixere fortes ante Agamemnona,”

and accomplished performers, who were con-

temporary with him ; and in this, indeed, and in the cultivated state of the art, consisted part of the difficulties, that he had to encounter, when he first rushed upon us from the provinces.

In the year 1814, (when Kean made his debut in London,) acting had grown into an art altogether different from those mean and crude exhibitions, which signalised the birth of the English Drama ; when, in the spirit of merry Christmas, “ The Clergy and Scholars of Saint Paul’s ” disguised themselves as saints and martyrs, for the edification of the public, (and their own private emolument) ; and when those “ companies of men called vagrants,”—their rivals,—assuming less virtuous exteriors, went rambling about the country, playing merry and profane pieces, and levying rates (or rather tithes in kind) in every town and village, after the fashion of the Capuchins.

The stage had long boasted, and with reason, that men of considerable intellect had resorted to it, as to a liberal profession; and that, as a consequence, the theatre had attained a rank in the social system, which entitled it to consideration. At what precise time it began its rise it is not necessary to inquire. It is most probable, we think, that good acting began when there first appeared something worthy to be represented. The "Mysteries" and "Moralities" of our forefathers were things so utterly contemptible in all respects, except simply as regards a mere amiable design, that Roscius himself would have been damned without ceremony, had he ventured to expose himself in them. There must, at all times, be a foundation and stimulus for the actor. He must have good sense or emphatic lines to utter; poetry or epigram to recite; the husk or outline of a character to fill,—or he is lost. His own

vivacity and intelligence (though much depends on these) are not "the all and all" here. Accordingly, when the Drama shook off the rubbish of words and dull absurdities which had previously oppressed it, and sprang up in its full strength, about the time of Elizabeth, good actors appeared also. Burbage and Alleyne, Taylor and Mason were without doubt very able men. But the first person who exhibited positive *genius* in acting, seems to have been Betterton. His excellencies have met with a fit critic in the person of Colley Cibber; a man who has rashly been denounced as a blockhead, but who was, in fact, a keen and discriminating observer. It is a singular error of fortune, that this author should be known less by his own deserving writings, than by the wit of his enemy. He was a dramatist of considerable merit, and a good actor; and his "Apology" (which every one ought to

read) combines acute criticism with liveliness of detail, in a greater degree than can be elsewhere found in certainly English biography. Nevertheless, he stands out in our recollection—not as the critic, the actor, the dramatist, or the biographer; but as the hero and effigy of dulness, in the bitter slanders of Pope.

Betterton was, according to various concurring testimonies, in the very first order of actors. We do not agree with Cibber, that he and Shakspeare (!) were “formed for the mutual assistance and illustration of each others genius.” We think that the fame of our great deer-stealer would have thriven without such companionship; however it might have fared with the reputation of Betterton. But we can easily believe that the actor was a person of subtle apprehension, and of a fine and vigilant judgment. “He could vary his spirit,” says Cibber, “to the

different characters he acted. Those wild impatient starts which he threw into Hotspur, never came from the unruffled temper of his Brutus: when the Betterton Brutus was provoked, in his dispute with Cassius, his spirit flew only to his eye. With the settled dignity of contempt, like an impeding rock, he repelled upon himself the foam of Cassius. —Betterton had a voice of that kind, which gave more spirit to terror than to the softer passions; of more strength than melody.”

“ He had so full a possession of the esteem and regard of his auditors, that upon his entrance into every scene, he seemed to seize upon the eyes and ears of the giddy and inadvertent. In the just delivery of poetical numbers, particularly where the sentiments are pathetic, it is scarce credible upon how minute an article of sound depends their greatest beauty or inaffection. The voice of a singer is not more strictly tied to time

and tune, than that of an actor in theatrical elocution. The least syllable too long or too slightly dwelt upon in a period, depreciates it to nothing ; while every syllable, if rightly touched, shall, like the heightening stroke of light from a master's pencil, give life and spirit to the whole. I never heard a line in tragedy come from Betterton, wherein my judgment, my ear, and my imagination, were not fully satisfied : which since his time I cannot equally say of any actor whatsoever."

It is thus that Cibber, his contemporary, speaks of him ; and the eulogy is echoed or confirmed by all other writers, who have examined into the subject of the acted drama.

Of the same age with Betterton, were Kynaston the tyrant, Montfort the lover, and Sandford "the Spagnolet" (or villain) of the stage. Each of these had his peculiar merit. But they were rather accessories

than principals. Betterton was undoubtedly the head and crowning spirit of the time ; and from him (if from any *one* person alone) we must derive our knowledge as to what style of acting was then prevalent.

The next actor whose manner gave a tone to the stage, seems to have been Quin. For Booth, notwithstanding Cibber's careful commendation of him, was rather a person forming himself upon a preceding model, (that of Betterton,) than an original performer. Neither he nor Barry (nor Henderson, in a later age,) could be considered as enjoying undisputed pre-eminence in their profession, or as originating the then style or fashion of the stage.

Quin's was the grandiloquent or artificial style. He exhibited the form rather than the soul of tragedy. Parts of dignity and lofty pride became him, such as Coriolanus or Cato ; but he did not excel in representing

the ebb and flow of the passions,—the lights, and shadows, and conflicting elements, which go to make up the sum of the human character. He wore the cothurnus rather than the buskin*; and appeared dressed in the fetters rather than the ornaments of the Muse. Nevertheless, he reigned till the year 1741, when a more potent spirit arose, and he was suddenly and for ever displaced by Garrick.

Garrick, from every account, must assuredly have been an extraordinary actor—perhaps the most complete one that ever trod upon the English stage. For he was not distinguished simply by one line of character. He was excellent in almost all that he undertook, and was despicable in none. To gain credit, as he did, in *Romeo* and *Lear*, in

* Both the cothurnus and the buskin were worn in tragedy, but the former was made so as to give an artificial height to the performer.

Macbeth, Don Felix, Ranger, Hamlet, and Abel Drugger, shows a talent marvellously apprehensive and plastic. And, be it observed, that the merit of his playing was a thing past dispute. He had not merely a party of admirers, a section of the town; but the suffrages of all people were his; and we must conclude that he deserved them. It is not long ago since some of the play-goers of his time survived, and they all, to a man, pronounced upon him the most unqualified panegyrics. A good (although small) figure, a quick and fiery eye, features wonderfully flexible, and the decided air of a gentleman, were the physical requisites which Garrick brought towards the constitution of a great actor. And his other pretensions were of the same sufficing sort; for he had ambition and a natural wit, some learning, industry, a lively apprehension, and sound discriminating

sense. By the aid of all these qualities, he reigned for many years, sole and absolute lord of the legitimate drama.

At last, Garrick, victorious through life over every competitor, retired in his turn; and then Mr. John Kemble arose, and gave to the stage a model for classic grace, for Roman heroism and stoic pride. With all the dignity of Quin, he surpassed him in characters where more than mere voice or figure was demanded, as in *Penruddock* and the *Stranger*, where deep touches of human feeling link the misanthrope to the man; or, as in *Macbeth*, where the spirit is not degraded, by education or habit or its own weakness, below the human sympathies; but sublimated beyond them, and raised to preternatural grandeur, by intercourse with creatures of a more potent order. In these, Mr. Kemble exhibited the pathos

of the one, and the wild solemn abstraction of the other, in a manner that would have borne comparison with any actor.

It is needless to tell our readers, since it must be fresh in the recollection of most of them, that Mr. Kemble was succeeded, as a leader of tragedy, by the hero of this present book.

When Kean threw himself upon the London stage, to take his chance with the public, he found a luxurious theatre, fastidious judges, and many experienced and accomplished performers. In tragedy, (as well as in comedy,) there were persons of established reputation and sterling merit. He had to contest the palm with these; upon their own ground; before audiences accustomed to their manner; and before critics prepossessed in their favour. It is no trifling proof of talent, to have triumphed over these impediments; to have gained an equal number of partisans

and admirers; and to have struck out, amidst many models, an undeniably original style. Whatever may be the opinion of his merits in other respects, his claims to originality are undoubted. The very defects, which his enemies attribute to him, afford conclusive evidence on this point.

At this time, the form of tragedy was dignified and imposing. The family of Kemble, with Mr. Young, their disciple, occupied the stage. They declaimed in a fine and polished style; and, in truth, they were worthy to represent the heroes, real and fictitious, which Shakspeare and other lesser magicians have conjured up, and filled with more than "their wonted fires," for the benefit of the lovers of the drama. It must be admitted that the chance of bringing together a band of actors equally good and effective, was scarcely within the limits of probability. Nevertheless, it was not requi-

site, nor for the advantage of the stage, that these excellent actors should monopolise it. Competition for the public favour was even desirable; possibly for the preservation of the Kemble school,—certainly for the progress of the public taste. Whether the acting of Mr. Kemble was better than that of Mr. Kean, or worse, is a matter of little importance. There exists no ungracious necessity for instituting a strict comparison between these two eminent men. Had Kean even turned out the worse actor, the stimulus which his appearance must have given to the opposite school of acting, would of itself have been useful. Mr. Kemble's acting was undoubtedly in a noble and effective style of art. But it is not clear that it was in the *best* style. For instance, it differed from that of Garrick. Was it therefore better than Garrick's?—We think that a pause must ensue, before the question can be judiciously

answered in the affirmative. Then, Mr. Kemble (Mrs. Siddons also, the most complete tragic actress of her country, was in the same predicament,) was better in some characters than in others. The inevitable consequence from this is, that he was deficient in some ; and in 'some,' therefore, he might be surpassed. He was great in Wolsey, in Coriolanus, in Brutus, in Penruddock, and in Cato: even in Macbeth, he might be said to have been great. But in Othello and Richard the Third, in Shylock and Sir Giles Overreach, and other parts, his acting was of a different quality. All this shows that the tragic drama, although for the most part ably represented, was not in all its parts completely filled. There was in fact, a vacuum,—a defect, which Mr. Kean came forward and attempted to supply.

The history of his exploits, in London and the provinces, will be found in the following

pages. Whether our occasional estimates of his talents be correct or not, we cannot pretend to say ; but they are at all events impartial. Our leaning (by reason of personal intercourse and old admiration,) is towards the members of the opposite school ; yet we shall not be found to have been swayed by this from doing justice to Kean. If it be said, that we have been hasty or superficial ; that we have not determined our hero's exact merits in every part which he undertook to fill ; nor his precise rank in the scale of histrionic excellence ; the almost insurmountable nature of the task must excuse us. Criticism is a delicate thing, and should be nicely balanced. We enter no claims to be looked upon as critics : we want the necessary courage : we were not born critics, nor heroes *. All that we

* The learned Dean of Saint Patrick's, says, " Every true critic is a hero born, descending in a direct line from the celestial stem, by Momus and Hybris, who

pretend to do is to state our impressions. We abandon criticism to others. We fancy that we see how it ought to conduct itself; but having been witnesses in our time of some signal failures in the Aristarchian art, we have become diffident of our own opinions.

If we were to attempt to determine the genius of a man, we should endeavour, we think, to show the general rather than the particular qualities of it. We do not say that the mere amount should be given, without any specification of the items that constitute it; but that a wide and philosophic view should be aimed at, rather than a microscopic survey of its minuter parts. The stature and outline and expres-

begat Zoilus, who begat Tigellius, who begat Etcætera the elder, who begat Bentley and Rymer, and Wooton, and Perrault, and Dennis, who begat Etcætera the younger"—The Dean did not live to complete the pedigree.

sion,—the strength and weakness,—in a word the character, should be studied and rendered ; not sacrificed to minute and hypercritical details. In the medium between the two errors — a vague estimate (or guess) on the one hand, and a petty scrutiny on the other,—the merit and safety (*medio tutissimus*) of criticism consists. We should view our subject on every side, and upon all occasions. We should make allowances for every accidental circumstance ; and judge him dispassionately, and from a proper distance. A painter transfers to his canvas neither the dim form of the person whom he would represent, nor every individual hair or vein that belongs to him ; but the clear object, as we meet and see it every day. He knows that a picture is intended, not to authenticate the marks which are found on the human body ; but in order that a man (when he

shall be dead, or absent,) may be recognised by his friends.

For these and other reasons, we have been desirous of abstaining from a precise or judicial air, when speaking of our hero's merits; preferring to give our impressions merely, and leaving the reader at full liberty to adopt them or not as he pleases. Authors are too apt to affect the Dominie, and talk authoritatively to their friends the public. We are but beginners, and take humbler ground. We decide on nothing: we affect no importance. Our aim is to give wings to a dull hour—to gossip with the good-natured reader in his arm-chair, at his breakfast-table, or by his evening fire. If we now and then discuss some little point carelessly, it is with a proper share of diffidence, and without any ambitious views of making a crowd of proselytes.

In this spirit only, we venture to say that we think Kean possessed what few actors can lay claim to, namely, originality. He impressed *character* on almost everything which he attempted. He did not merely recite his part, but act it,—a very different matter. You could not confound his acting with that of any other man; nor, as a consequence, the character which he represented, with any other character in the play. It was (right or wrong) distinguishable from others. This is, after an inferior fashion, what Shakspeare has done, and what Sir Walter Scott, and Cervantes, and Fielding have done. This is, in short, the *Intellectual* Style. There is another style, where the actor or actress exhibits pathos, without character; showing tenderness, grace, gentleness, or sorrow; but nothing more. This may be called the *Lachrymose* Style. Then, there is the grandiloquent, or “Ercles’ vein”

or style. And there are also various other methods of acting, which amount to no style at all.

In regard to Kean's private character, we have left it to speak for itself. We are not censors of his morals. Some circumstances in his life, indeed, require neither illustration nor comment. But there are other things, doubtful in fact or uncertain as to motive; and upon these, we think it prudent to be silent. It is not safe, at all times, to judge of men by their deeds alone. Were we *in imo pectore*, we might proclaim our opinions without reserve; but till then, we will show virtue and refrain. Above all, we will not weary ourselves (nor our readers) with any fruitless lamentations, as to what our tragedian *might* have been, had certain purer particles entered into his composition. His qualities, good and bad as they were, formed the man. From them sprang his genius,

his vigour, his character. It was probably the collision between the two, that struck out those brilliant sparks which the world has so long been accustomed to admire. Had he wanted some quality which we deplore, he might have had another, less favourable to the development of his genius. He might have been a truckling parasite, instead of a vain, violent, and reckless man. What was headstrong passion, might have been deliberate roguery. His intemperance might have been exchanged for sober hatred; his ambition for a love of oppression; his mad extravagance for some dark and sordid vice. And here, as some extenuation for his last-mentioned fault, which has found many commentators, we will quote some observations on the subject, from a writer who loved to look charitably on human actions, and who thought that even the extravagance of actors might have some excuse, which the wealthy

and the prudent had not been able to detect.

“ With respect to the extravagance of actors, as a traditional character, it is not to be wondered at; they live from hand to mouth; they plunge from want into luxury; they have no means of making money *breed*; and all professions that do not live by turning money into money, or have not a certainty of accumulating it in the end by parsimony, spend it. Uncertain of the future, they make sure of the present moment. This is not unwise. Chilled with poverty, steeped in contempt, they sometimes pass into the sunshine of fortune, and are lifted to the very pinnacle of public favour, yet even there cannot calculate on the continuance of success, but are, ‘like the giddy sailor on the mast, ready with every blast to topple down into the fatal bowels of the deep!’ Besides, if the young enthusiast who is smitten with the

stage, and with the public as a mistress, were naturally a close hunk, he would become or remain a city clerk, instead of turning player. Again, with respect to the habit of convivial indulgence, an actor to be a good one must have a great spirit of enjoyment in himself, strong impulses, strong passions, and a strong sense of pleasure, for it is his business to imitate the passions and to communicate pleasure to others. A man of genius is not a machine. The neglected actor may be excused if he drinks oblivion of his disappointments: the successful one, if he quaffs the applause of the world, and enjoys the friendship of those who are the friends of the favourites of fortune, in draughts of nectar. There is no path so steep as that of fame; no labour so hard as the pursuit of excellence. The intellectual excitement inseparable from those professions which call forth all our sensibility to pleasure and pain, requires some corresponding physical excitement to

support our failure, and not a little to allay the ferment of the spirits attendant on success. If there is any tendency to dissipation beyond this in the profession of a player, it is owing to the state of public opinion, which paragraphs full of censure are not calculated to reform; and players are only not so *respectable* as a profession as they might be, because their profession is not *respected* as it ought to be."

One word more. We have forbore to touch upon the merits or demerits of any living actor. Not but that we have formed our opinion regarding them. It is impossible, indeed, not to do this in some degree, after having for a long time frequented the theatres. The passion and energy of a player will force itself into our admiration: the sparkling comedy of another, the vapid monotony of a third, will have their due effect. However resolute we may be, their vices and virtues thrust themselves upon

our notice. Whatever vows of indifference we may make, we must weep or laugh or slumber (as the case may be) under the influence of "the followers of Thespis." But, although we must yield in this point to the frailty of the flesh, we may yet forbear to record our opinions. Indeed, prudence and good-nature both prompt us to silence. First, we have a lurking notion, that in order to satisfy the souls of actors, (there are exceptions of course) we must administer a larger portion of honey than we can conscientiously spare. For, notwithstanding they deal in the heroic measure, and are as used to sceptres and robes of ermine as to their everyday meal, yet are they (like all others, authors themselves included)

" Commanded

By such poor passion as the maid that milks,
And does the meanest chares."

And secondly, the poor denizens of the

stage are sufficiently troubled with critics already. Daily, weekly, and monthly, these tormentors sting them in the tenderest places. We will not add to their discomfort. We have received great pleasure in our day, from even the meanest of the sons of Thalia. They have soothed us in times of pain. They have done what neither reason, nor the Leech's aid, nor

“ All the drowsy syrups of the East,”

could effect ;—they have drawn a sweet oblivion 'round us for a while, and made us forget the world and its many troubles ; and we will not requite them with hasty or unjust censures. They are an active and intelligent body of men, and beyond comparison the most amusing company extant.

With this intimation, we leave our hero and his history to their fate.

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L I F E
OF
E D M U N D K E A N .

CHAPTER I.

BIRTH AND PARENTAGE—MATERNAL ANCESTRY—
ABANDONED BY HIS MOTHER—ADOPTED BY MISS
TIDSWELL—PUT OUT TO NURSE—HIS APPEAR-
ANCE (WHEN A CHILD) AT DRURY LANE THEA-
TRE—RECITES RICHARD III.—INTRODUCED TO
MRS. CLARKE—EXHIBITS AT HER HOUSE.

IT is a custom of authors, when compiling
the history of any one of their great men,
to usher in his achievements by some mag-
nificent preamble. In this, the writer, not
satisfied with the simple merits of his hero,

inflicts upon him a long and unprofitable pedigree; tracing his ancestry, without help from heralds or affidavits, straight up to the times of Fingal, or the Flood. We shall venture to deviate from this ancient custom.

We are of opinion, that a heavy genealogical foundation is by no means necessary to support a great man's fame. Other persons, we admit, take a different view of the subject. The Chinese, for instance, (who excel even the Welsh in this respect,) derive their kings and conquerors lineally from the moon. For our own parts, we should be content to refer to "The Man" *in* it. Under these impressions, we take leave, upon the present occasion, to tell simply the truth. And should we be accused, hereafter, of having done this at the expense of our tragedian, why "*Be chesm!*" (as the Persians cry out,) "*On our eyes be it!*" We are willing to endure all the obloquy that shall attach to such an original proceeding.

Our prologue, it will be seen, is very brief. That done, we will now proceed to facts.

The birth and parentage of EDMUND KEAN are, apparently, equally unknown. It would have been easy, indeed, from the handsome quantity of materials before us, to have rendered a very satisfactory account of our hero's origin; but we have refrained. Indeed, we feel bound in honour, to declare our belief, that no such information exists as his biographers can use with *entire* confidence. One statement is perpetually opposed to another, and date after date is encountered by denials, and sometimes utterly refuted by subsequent well established facts. Without impeaching the veracity of his historians, we may fairly doubt the fidelity of their memories. And, in regard to the accounts given by Kean himself, (to say nothing of their differing *from each other*,) he was at once so fond of mystification, and so oblivious or

careless of all truth relating to his childhood, that no reliance whatever can be placed upon them.

And, it is not very important, in the history of the remarkable man whose acts we are now about to record, that we should be enabled to specify the precise day and hour of his birth. Enough is known of the general course of his childhood, to assist us in ascribing to certain accidents of fortune, much of the good and evil of his after life.

From his personal appearance at different periods, it is scarcely possible to imagine the year of his birth to have been later than 1787. Miss Tidswell, indeed, places it in 1789; but we think she must have mistaken the year; for he was playing in tragedy, comedy, opera, farce, pantomime, and every line of character, in the early part of 1804, at Sheerness; so that he must at that time

have been at least seventeen years old. In 1806 he was (in Mr. Morris's phrase) "quite a young man," acting man's parts at the Haymarket theatre; and in 1808, when he was married, he bore the appearance of a man of two or three and twenty years of age. In fact, he was under an engagement to marry a young girl in Scotland, as early as the year 1805; a piece of ambition that he would scarcely have been guilty of at the immature age of sixteen years.

We cannot, as we have said, speak with certainty either as to his parentage or birth; but, according to the best conclusions we are able to form, from the conflicting evidence before us, Edmund Kean was the son of one Edmund Kean, by Ann Carey, and was born in the year 1787. Edmund Kean, the supposed father, was in the employ of a Mr. Wilmot, the builder of the Royalty theatre, and whilst occupied there, became intimate

with Miss Carey, at that time an actress. He was, moreover, brother to Moses Kean, a man possessing considerable fame as a general mimic, and who imitated Garrick *inimitably*. Miss Carey herself was the daughter of George Savile Carey, a person who (after acting, without much effect, at Covent Garden, for a single season,) lectured on heads, mimicry, &c., and drew upon that indefinite patrimony, "his wits," for both reputation and support. He died in 1807. Her grandfather, Henry Carey, was author of "Chrononhotonthologos," "The Dragon of Wantley," and various operas and interludes, now with the moths. He is also answerable for a quantity of indifferent ballads, (published under the title of "The Musical Century,") in which he was both writer and composer. This last named gentleman terminated his career unhappily. He perished in his house in Cold Bath Fields,

in the year 1743, having strangled himself with a cord, whilst in a state of despondency. At the time of young Edmund Kean's birth, his grandfather, George Savile Carey, resided in some chambers in Gray's Inn, belonging to a Mr. Turner, who being greatly in debt, and compelled to return the answer of "*non est inventus*" to all obliging inquiries, had lent his chambers to Carey.

And thus ends our knowledge of the ancestors of Edmund Kean.

The introduction of our hero to this world of actors, is derived from Miss Tidswell. "On the 17th of March, 1789," says she, (*we read 1787,*) "at half-past three in the morning, Edmund Kean, the father, came to me, and said—'Nance Carey is with child, and begs you to go to her, at her lodgings in Chancery Lane.' Accordingly I and my aunt went with him, and found Nancy Carey near her time. We asked her if she had proper neces-

saries? She replied, 'No, nothing;' whereupon Mrs. Byrne begged the loan of some baby clothes, and Nancy Carey was removed to the Chambers, in Gray's Inn, which her father then occupied; and it was there that the boy was born."

This occurrence, which it will be observed took place on

"Saint Patrick's day in the morning,"

is the whole that is known of our player's birth-day history. He was tended, it seems, during the two first years of his life, by his mother; but, at the expiration of that period, she refused to keep him any longer, and Miss Tidswell therefore took him. This lady had already seen him at Richmond, where the mother was acting. Mrs. Price, the father's sister, ("Aunt Price," as she was called,) had been one day at Miss Tidswell's lodgings, and said "Let us go over, and see Ned." Upon

which, the other consenting, both of them went to Richmond together ; and there Miss Tidswell, for the first time, cast her eyes upon the future Richard the Third, who had then been four or five months at “the breast.” He was even then much neglected, and was afterwards more so ; and when Miss Carey declined being troubled any longer with the maternal offices, Miss Tidswell took him, as we have stated, generously offering him, however, in the first instance, to “Aunt Price.” “Why not take care of him ?” said she, “it will be much better.” But Aunt Price, a prudent mantua-maker, declined this proposal, and replied that “she did not wish to have him.” In the end, after having been pushed about and rejected like “the mark” at school, the father put out the poor child to nurse with a woman in the neighbourhood of London, who very speedily evinced her qualifications for that tender office, by allowing

her charge to become crooked. He grew bow-legged, knock-kneed, walked on his ankles, and exhibited other symptoms of his nurse's care. All these indications of weakness, however, disappeared long before he became a man. The first remedy applied was in the shape of irons, which the child was compelled to wear on both legs until he was about seven or eight years of age. . It seems that he wore these irons continually. There were two sets of them ; one for day and the other for night. The former had joints, and there were screws in them, to "screw him up." Mr. Duncan, a gentleman who showed him much kindness at that time, says, "He used to sleep with me and my wife in the irons, *and they hurt us.*"

Some persons have asserted that Kean was never at school ; others that he was a scholar at Eton. Both these assertions were incorrect. His education, indeed, was of the very slen-

derest sort ; but some attempts were certainly made to whip the elements of knowledge into him. He was sent by Miss Tidswell to a little day-school in London ; but he would not learn any thing. He hated most unfeignedly the confinement and labour of school, (probably he had tasted its discipline) ; and in this dislike originated that habit of running away from his friends when any thing went wrong, which never forsook him up to the day of his marriage. Instead of going to the little school, he would play truant for a couple of days at a time, and in the end quitted the "Academy," as little oppressed by learning, of any sort, as can well be imagined. He was afterwards at another school, in Chapel-street, Soho, kept by a Mr. King, where he remained between two and three years ; but the amount of his progress there is not reported.

During the early years of his life, his

mother, after abandoning him to Miss Tidswell, pursued her usual itinerant habits; being sometimes with strolling companies at provincial theatres and fairs, and at others going from house to house with flowers, powder, pomatum, &c., for sale. When the boy grew old enough to accompany her, she took him with her; not for any assistance that he could render, but because of his appearance, which was in a high degree interesting, and promoted the sale of her wares. Previously to this time, however, and, in fact, when he was scarcely two years of age, he appeared in some opera as "Cupid." There is no doubt but that his beauty, which in childhood was always remarkable, recommended him to this celestial post. Indeed, during the performance, some old lady, in the fulness of her dotage, inquired if he were "*really* a living child."

The following anecdote, given by Michael

Kelly in his "Reminiscences," differs little in effect from Kean's own recollections on the subject. He is speaking of the opera of "CYMON." Michael's style is incomparably more curious than the anecdote itself. If the latter part of the paragraph be true, our hero's gratitude must have commenced at the tender age of two years! "Before the piece was brought out, I had a number of children brought to me, that I might choose a Cupid. One struck me, with a fine pair of black eyes, who seemed, by his looks and *little* gestures, most anxious to be chosen as the *little* god of love. I chose him, and *little* did I then imagine that my *little* Cupid would eventually become a great actor: the then *little* urchin was neither more nor less than—Edmund Kean. He has often told me that he *ever after this period* (!) felt a regard for me, from the circumstance of my having preferred him to the other children. I con-

sider MY having been the means of INTRODUCING THIS GREAT GENIUS TO THE STAGE (!!!), one of my most pleasurable recollections." The reader has our full authority to laugh at this burlesque.

We afterwards (about 1794 or 1795) find Master Carey at Drury Lane, where he acted Blue Beard; not indeed the full-grown bloody bashaw, who cuts the matrimonial knot with such dexterity, but the innocent diminutive *boy*-Blue Beard, who, before the commencement of the tragedy, appears in perspective, riding over the hills. He also formed one of the band of little devils with which John Kemble enlivened one of the scenes in "Macbeth." Kean himself admitted this, and also that he tripped up his brother goblins,—“They fell like a pack of cards.” Mr. Kemble was angry at the young actor’s going out of his part, thumped him, and would not allow him again to mis-

behave,—as a spirit. Nevertheless, he afterwards filled a few child's parts at the same theatre. He played the *Page* in "Love makes a Man," the *Page* to Sir John Falstaff, and other things; relieving however the tedium of his existence by imitating Jack Bannister and other famous players. He also about this time began to recite Rolla's address to the Peruvians, Satan's address to the sun, and portions of Richard the Third, &c., at various places. Mrs. Charles Kemble recollects hearing a clanking noise at the theatre one night, and on inquiring as to the cause, was answered, "It is only little Kean reciting Richard the Third in the green-room; he's acting after the manner of Garrick. Will you go and see him? He is really very clever." And there he was, "*really* very clever," acting to a semicircle of gazers, and exhibiting the fierceness, and possibly some of the niceties

of that character, in which, fifteen years afterwards, he drew to the theatre (which he enriched and adorned) thousands and thousands of spectators, and built up for himself a renown that will last—that *must* last—as long as “the actor’s fame.”

It was during one of Miss Carey’s circuits, with her powder and flowers, that she called at the house of Mr. Young, a surgeon, the father of Charles Young, the tragedian. This gentleman received her, patronised her, and recommended her to Mrs. Clarke, the wife of Mr. Clarke, of Guildford Street, who was then staying in his house. The whole story of little Kean’s first acquaintance with this lady not only reflects credit on her discrimination, but is interesting in itself. The particulars from which the following account is taken, are derived from one who was an eye-witness of all that occurred.

Mr. Young commences the history by

introducing the mother of the future tragedian to his patroness: "Here is a very charming woman, the daughter of your favourite lecturer, George Savile Carey. She can supply you with French perfumery and Mareschalle powder, genuine and cheap." Mrs. Clarke looked up at the powder-merchant, and saw a pair of brilliant eyes, exactly like those of her father. She made some purchases, as may be supposed, and intimated an intention of making others in future. In consequence of this, Miss Carey afterwards took the lady's house in her rounds, regularly calling with her cases of perfumery, &c., some of which the lady as regularly bought. In the course of the conversations that arose on these visits, Miss Carey, (probably in answer to some inquiry on the subject,) explained that she acted at theatres of an inferior order, accompanied by her brother, who also bore the name of

Carey. He played on the guitar, and both together exhibited a sort of duet-drama, at Richmond and various other places in the neighbourhood of London. She also spoke of her own "very clever little boy," mentioning however that he was then with a Roman Catholic lady, who took him to mass. The master of the chapel had, she said, with her leave, made him "one of the choir boys, whose office it was to throw incense and sing." She proceeded to consult Mrs. Clarke on this subject, when that lady advised her to let the boy remain under the lady's protection, and be brought up by her and put out to some trade,—to anything, in short, rather than to her own itinerant and uncertain way of life. Mrs. Clarke urged, in addition, the fact of his great talents, and the advantage that the mother might reasonably hope to make of them. After the fashion of persons enduring advice, all the

unanswerable arguments were assented to by Miss Carey; and she, eventually, disclosed how far she had benefited by them, by confessing to Mrs. Clarke that—she had withdrawn her “very clever little boy” altogether from his Roman Catholic friend. He no longer sung or swung incense. The priest had lost his proselyte, the Roman Catholic lady her protégé. In exchange for his flowing robes and fuming censers, Master Carey had now the privilege of wandering about from place to place, with his mother; bearing her burthens of powder and pomatum; perhaps seconding her efforts to dispose of her merchandise; or stepping in with his testimony, when any of the customers were infidels enough to imagine that the Mareschalle powder was not “genuine.” He was an intelligent, merry, reckless boy; and, in a state not very distant from starvation, might

be seen laughing, talking, and singing (not, we suspect, after the choir fashion), and

“Putting the spirit of youth in every thing.”

Such was his occupation, when Miss Carey, after receiving from Mrs. Clarke certain superfluous finery, proposed one day to make that lady acquainted personally with him. The following is the history of his first appearance at Mrs. Clarke's.

A thundering rap is heard at the door. The footman, with an approximation to a grin on his face, enters and announces—“Master Carey, ma'am.”—“Master Carey?” was the inquiry. “Yes, ma'am; he comes from his mother, *Miss* Carey, who brings the perfumery here to sell. He *says* he is Master Carey.” “Show him up by all means.” Mrs. Clarke stood. The door was thrown open, and a slim pale boy, of about ten years old,

enters—very poorly clad, ragged, with dirty hands, face washed, delicate skin, brilliant eyes, superb head of curled and matted hair, and a piece of a hat in his hand ! With the bow and air of a prince, he delivers his message: “ My mother, madam, sends her duty, and begs you will be so good as to lend her a shilling to take the spangled tiffany petticoat out of pawn, as she wants it to appear in at Richmond to-morrow.” In answer to this petition, the lady put forth an interrogation ; “ Are you the little boy who can act so well ? ” A bow of assent, and a kindling cheek were the sole reply. “ What can you act ? ”—The answer was, “ Richard the Third—Speed the Plough—Hamlet —and Harlequin.” “ I should like very much to see you,” said the lady. “ I should be proud to act to you,” was the return. “ Well, here’s the money for your mother,” said Mrs. Clarke ; “ but stay,” added she, throwing open the door of the

back drawing-room, where her husband sat writing. He was a grave stout man, who had left off going to plays. She brought forward our hero: "This is little Edmund Carey." A low bow from Master Edmund Carey finished the introduction. Mr. Clarke looked at him, and was struck with his air, as well as with his delicate and expressive features, and which, contrasted with the poverty of his clothes, must have touched and interested even the commonest observer. We do not know what commendation or good advice was bestowed by Mr. Clarke; but Mrs. Clarke and her young friend parted, with a promise, on his part, that he would come again at six o'clock that evening, and give a specimen of his acting. In the meantime, the lady, filled with the merits of her protégé, ran to her next door neighbour (who was the well-known Mr. John Mason Good), and to three or four other friends, and

invited them all to come and see her "extraordinary little boy."

In the evening the friends arrived, sufficiently sceptical as to the "little boy's" talents, but not without some curiosity to see after what fashion they and their hostess were to be disappointed. The hour arrived—six o'clock; but Master Carey was still absent. At last, the same thundering rap which had preceded his advent in the morning, sounded again upon the door. It was certainly he. The lady flew to the head of the stair-case, in order to be the first to welcome her protégé, and also that she might receive him alone; for she was jealous as to the impression which he was to make, and was apprehensive lest those humble auxiliaries, soap and water, might be necessary in order to all-perfect her hero. But no: his face was clean, the delicacy of his complexion was more obvious than before, and

his beautiful hair had been combed, and shone like the wing of a raven. His dress, indeed, had suffered no improvement; but a frilled handkerchief of his mother's was tucked inside his jacket, and was more than a substitute for a shirt collar. He was a new man. His friend was satisfied and proud. At the same time, in order the more completely to qualify him for the task which he was about to undertake, she took him secretly to her dressing-room, summoned her maid, and despatched her for some black ribband, in order to substitute something heroic for the commercial pack-thread which ornamented his shoes. They then commenced a search for other finery; and at last came upon a black riding-hat, with feathers in it. This prize was seized upon, turned up in front with pins, and accommodated to his head; and, to put a finishing stroke to this grand equipment, a real sword and belt were found, which were

buckled on the tragedian without delay. Never had he looked so magnificent, even in his dreams !

The lady led him, beaming with delight, into the drawing-room, and presented him to her assembled friends. They sat in a silent circle, and surveyed him. Had time permitted, they might have smiled ; but scarcely allowing himself time to bow, he rushed eagerly to the further end of the room, which had been fixed upon as a stage, (and where there was a door for his exit and entrance, and a curtain for a scene,) and began. It was no small task that lay before him. He had to face the smiles of an audience sceptical of his talents, and to conquer them : yet he did this—nay, he did more ; for the expression in the countenances of his audience changed from contempt (or distrust) into attention,—from attention to admiration,—to silent wonder,—to tears ! He,

who was not then ten years old, shewed them how the patriotism of Rolla, and the bloody policy of Richard, ought, and was thereafter to be exhibited. They were deaf to the prophecy, indeed ; but they were, nevertheless, well pleased with the ingenious little player, and rewarded him with a shower of shillings and sixpences, which he would not pick up ! The money however was forced on him at last, and he was sent home richer than he had ever been before, and flushed with success. Lest the reader should apprehend danger to him from this sudden influx of wealth, be it known that "Miss Carey" took the precaution of invariably relieving him from such incumbrances, until he arrived at years of—*discretion*.

CHAPTER II.

PROTECTED BY MRS. CLARKE—RUNS AWAY—ENTERS
RICHARDSON'S COMPANY—ACTS BEFORE KING
GEORGE THE THIRD—HIS TRUANT HABITS—HIS
THEATRICAL EDUCATION UNDER MISS TIDSWELL
—QUESTION AS TO HIS DESCENT FROM THE DUKE
OF NORFOLK.

MRS. CLARKE did not give up the boy when he had ceased to amuse her. On the contrary, she invited him continually to her house, and endeavoured to find out some mode of benefiting him. An opportunity not presenting itself very readily, she proposed to take him altogether from his mother. This was gladly assented to, and the child was transferred to Mrs. Clarke's protection, on the understanding that whatever he should obtain from his exhibitions before private

friends should, after retaining a small portion to pay the expense of masters, be given to his mother. It was under these circumstances that he was taught to dance, to fence, and to ride, and that he received instruction in various other ways. For the purpose of enabling him to receive these lessons uninterruptedly, he was kept at a lodging; so near to Mrs. Clarke's house, however, as to be within reach of immediate controul. His studies were varied by occasional performances before private parties, at the houses of his protectress and of her friends. Previously to these, she would lend him books, recite to him, hear him rehearse, and in other respects afford him her counsel. But when he gave his dramatic entertainments, all the characters were sustained by himself:

“He had his exits and his entrances,
And [truly] in *his* time played many parts.”

He had moreover a little bell, which he rang when the imaginary music was to begin; after which he entered, soliloquised, went through the dialogue (on both sides), fought, frowned, triumphed, and died, with ten times the applause of ordinary heroes. When the exhibition was to take place at any other house than that of Mrs. Clarke, he was sent there in her carriage, with his dramatic "properties," consisting of a hat and feathers, a sword, and white gloves: in other respects he wore the common costume of the day. He generally resorted to Shakespeare for his subjects, but would sometimes make little plays out of Spenser's Fairy Queen. And for his own amusement, in his leisure hours, he would frequently play on the piano-forte, by ear, or invent tunes, having however a book of music (which he could *not* read) always before him. From all accounts, he appears to have been docile

during this interval of his life; so completely so indeed, that we, now and then, try to think that the fact of his having been such an utter rebel and truant at other times, may be attributed in *some* degree to the idle and vagabond examples before him, rather than to a temper absolutely impracticable. He was, it is true, somewhat passionate, but the report is that he was generous also, and was liked by all persons about him. To speak of his humbler doings,—his agility at this period was remarkable, for “he could throw himself into all sorts of postures, and climb like a monkey.” He sang prettily also, and shewed a great talent for mimicry. Some of our readers may remember that he occasionally gave proofs of these last-mentioned accomplishments in the latter part of his life.

He dwelt nearly two years under the protection of Mrs. Clarke, and finally quitted it by reason of the following circumstance :

A gentleman and lady, with their two daughters, had come to Guildford Street on a visit. Upon this occasion, Edmund Carey, who at that time went to school in Hatton Garden, obtained a holiday, and delighted the little girls with his acting. In the evening, they were all to go to the theatre; and a discussion arising at dinner as to how the party were to be conveyed there, the mistress of the house began to reckon up the play-goers, naming amongst them "Edmund." Upon this, the gentleman (he must have been, as Iago says, "a silly gentleman,") exclaimed, "What, does *he* sit in the box with us?" The answer was, "Oh, yes." The question, however, involving as it did a doubt as to his fitness for the company into which he thus chanced to be thrown, was sufficient for the irritability of the boy. He would eat no more, but rose from the table, and, notwithstanding his friend pressed him to go into

the pit, (an injudicious compromise of the question, we think,) and tendered him money for the purpose, flung out of the room and disappeared. He was not at the theatre that evening, nor did he return home. He had fled—no one knew whither.

After the lapse of three weeks, however, during which time many vain inquiries were made after him, he was brought back by a man who lived in an adjoining mews, having been found there sleeping on a dunghill, in a state of exhaustion, ragged and foot-sore, and altogether in squalid disorder. He shewed much remorse, and being called upon to explain where he had been, answered that he had resolved to go to America, and had actually travelled on foot as far as Bristol. None of the seafaring men, however, to whom he applied would receive him into their vessels, on account of his being so little, and apparently so weak. He returned to

London, therefore, as well as he could, sleeping in outhouses, begging food, and enduring all sorts of distress and fatigue by the way.

This event determined Mr. Clarke to relinquish the protection which he (or rather his wife, by his permission) had hitherto extended to the poor player-boy. In order, however, that his departure might not wear the character of dismissal, a little benefit was made up for him, which, at all events, put him into a condition to encounter fortune for some short time to come. That over, he was flung back upon "the world." At this time he appeared to be about twelve years of age.

On his leaving Mrs. Clarke's house, he was furnished by her with a recommendation to Captain Millar, of the Staffordshire militia, which was then stationed at Windsor. He went to Windsor accordingly; and it must have been on this occasion that he was seen,

an active member, in Richardson's company of strollers. The probability is, that, on leaving Mrs. Clarke, he enrolled himself in Richardson's troop, to which his mother at that time belonged; and that both parent and child travelled to Windsor with the company. This was the first time that Master Carey ever beheld Eton, or the "antique towers" which Gray has celebrated. The story of his having been educated there is altogether false. It is much more like the truth, that he and his brother actors should have been pelted by the Eton boys, because those ambitious scholars were refused the privilege of drawing the manager's caravan into the town. This story, which is told as coming from the mouth of old Richardson, receives some confirmation from divers hints and expressions, now indistinctly remembered, which dropped from Kean in his after life, when he was recounting his first appearance

before King George the Third. For that he was at Windsor, and played before that monarch, who requited him with two guineas, is certain; the fact having been not only asserted by himself, but confirmed by Mrs. Heath, wife of the former master of Eton school. "We had your husband for two or three days," observed she to Mrs. Kean, "when he was a boy. The Eton boys were so fond of hearing him, that they asked Dr. Heath to permit him to recite, which he assented to. It was thus that the king heard of him, and had him to recite before him." Whethèr it was considered necessary to disfigure the little player, as has been stated, with the second-hand finery of a Jew's shop, in order to render him acceptable to royal eyes, appears uncertain. It is likely enough that the manager might think that he was not fine enough to spout "before a king," without some tawdry additions to

his wardrobe. We ourselves should have been satisfied with him in more simple attire ; for, although it is written of a dignified clergyman that

“ All his reverend wit
Lay in his wardrobe,”

this could never have been said of Kean, even when he was only twelve years old. His wit was always more laical.

Of the theatrical feats which Richardson's company performed at Windsor, it is not our cue to speak. It has been said that our hero's mother took the market-hall for three nights, and filled it by means of her son's recitations ; but this is problematical : we cannot vouch for the fact. It is tolerably certain, however, that Miss Carey was in the habit of telling fortunes, and that she told them at this particular period at Windsor ; with such success indeed, that she was dismissed with great expedition (lighter by

the weight of some silver spoons than was desirable to her) by the unrelenting authorities there. Of course "Master Carey" followed in her wake.

The mother and boy, in all probability, rejoined Richardson's troop, after the Windsor expedition, and accompanied it through its usual summer campaign. Kean, in fact, has often said that his first appearance in a "principal" part, was when he acted *Young Norval* in Richardson's company. He received something more than usual for the attempt, which Miss Carey, as usual, abstracted. Nevertheless, he seems to have continued strolling about with her, from place to place, swelling her theatrical gains. He was not philosophically content under his privations, however; for he repeatedly murmured, and in extreme cases ran away, "because," as he said, "she took *all* my money." These truant habits existed all his

life, with the exception only of the time when he lived with Mrs. Clarke. On such occasions, when he thought fit to quit his mother, on account of her affection for his salary, he deserted to Miss Tidswell, whom he left, in turn, because she beat him : he then went over to Aunt Price, and again quitted her, when, as it is said, "every thing was not to his taste."

It is difficult to say where his home lay at this time, if, indeed, he could be said to have any. He was, in effect, migratory. Perhaps Miss Tidswell may boast of having had the most of his society, although she was perpetually under the necessity of reclaiming him. At one time, he started off, and found his way to Portsmouth, without a penny in his pocket : whether he acted or begged by the way is not known. The account which he gave on his return was, that he slept in barns and out-houses, and ate turnips. At

another time, he ran away from Miss Tidswell, and found his way to a public-house near Vauxhall, where it appeared that he had employed his vacation in singing to the customers; his gains, however, being duly handed over to the landlord, who, in return for his services, supplied him with such board and lodging as a public-house at Vauxhall may be supposed to offer to an adventurer of this description. After some enquiries, Miss Tidswell discovered him in this retreat, and pounced upon him without ceremony whilst he was enacting the character of minstrel,—the spirit of song full upon him! According to his own account, she tied a rope round his waist, upon this occasion, and dragged him home. And, as a last desperate resource, she put a brass collar round his neck, with the words "*Theatre Royal, Drury Lane*" upon it. But he was wilder than the quagga. Whatever chance of reforming him might have

existed at one time, neither punishment nor kindness, scolding nor remonstrance, rope nor collar, could now reduce him to the level of a civilised being. He was like one of those creatures born in the woods, who never forget the savage freedom of their early life, and whom no ingenuity of man can tame.

That he was indebted to Miss Tidswell for his early and best theatrical education is beyond a doubt. He has acknowledged it frequently. She taught him his parts, by reading the speeches to him, and making him afterwards repeat them before her, with the proper emphasis. The first character of any importance which he filled at Drury Lane (that of Arthur in "King John,") he learned in this way, and got some credit by it. In order to prevent that vague sort of mouthing common to boys, and to beget in him the habit of sustaining dialogue with real persons, she used to place him before a picture, and compelled him to

address his speeches to it. And, in furtherance of the same system, she would change a fictitious name into a real one, and endeavour thus to excite his sympathy. As an instance of this, when she taught him the speech which Hamlet utters over the grave, she made him in the first place say, "Alas, poor uncle!"—his uncle, Moses Kean (who, like Yorick, was a facetious person) having lost a limb. When the boy's sympathy was raised, and the necessary emphasis and expression attained, the change of words from "uncle" into "Yorick," was easily managed. There is something at least very ingenious in this method of schooling. Upon minds not readily impressible, similar experiments might be made, we think, with a great chance of success.

Was Miss Tidswell related to him? This is a question which has often been asked; but by no one so often as by Kean himself.

"Why did she take so much trouble about me," he would say, "if I was not related to her? She did not like me; or, if she did, she didn't appear to do so. She kept me, indeed, but she used to thump me often enough, and tie me to the bed-post; and, at last, she put a collar round my neck, as though I had been a dog." He was himself very doubtful of "Miss Carey's" claim to the honour of being his mother. Her utter indifference towards him in his childhood, added to her habit of fleecing him of every penny that he earned, in some degree, it must be owned, justified this unfilial scepticism.

It has been repeatedly asserted that Miss Tidswell was really his mother, and that he owed his existence to her and to the late Duke of Norfolk. The lady, however, resolutely denies the maternity, and there is no forcing upon her an honour which she is

inclined to reject. Yet, to shew how very generally this opinion was entertained, and also to give a specimen of a great man's officiousness, we are assured that soon after Kean had established his fame in London, one of his patrons, Sir ———, waited upon the tragedian, and insisted that "*as* Miss Tidswell was his mother, he ought to settle something handsome upon her." Kean, without disputing the premises, was indignant at this interference in his private concerns: nevertheless, he sent, or promised to send (for the memory of our informant is imperfect on this point) some money to the lady, as an acknowledgment of her early care. The money, or the offer, must, however, have been declined by Miss Tidswell, if it were ever tendered; for there is no proof of any sum having been paid to her.

Not only did Miss Tidswell reject our

poor hero, but the Duke of Norfolk disclaimed him also ; be it observed, however, with fitting respect. It happened thus :—Kean was one night playing Richard the Third at Drury Lane, in his first season, when Lord Essex, on going out of his box into the lobby, encountered the Duke, and addressed him with the pertinent question, “ Why don’t you acknowledge your son ? ” The hereditary Earl Marshal was naturally staggered by such an interrogation, and retorted, “ What son ? ” “ Why, Kean,” answered the lord ; “ It is reported generally that he is your son, and that Miss Tidswell is his mother.”—“ I assure you,” replied the Duke, “ that I should be very proud to acknowledge him. But this is the first intimation that I have received on the subject.” These distinct assaults upon the imaginary parents of the tragedian are ridiculous enough ; but

the result seems to establish the fact, that Kean must look elsewhere for his parentage ; and that the blood that ran racing through his veins, had no right to claim any alliance with that patrician stream, which circled in the hearts of "all the Howards."

CHAPTER III.

HIS RECITATIONS IN LONDON—GOES TO MADEIRA—
IS A STROLLER IN SCOTLAND—RIDES A RACE—
EARLY ATTACHMENTS—ACQUAINTANCE WITH RAE
—ENTERS THE SHEERNESS COMPANY—ACTS WITH
MRS. SIDDONS—SWIMS ACROSS THE THAMES—
JOINS THE HAYMARKET CORPS—RETURNS TO
SHEERNESS.

IT has been already stated that “Master Carey,” on quitting the protection of his friends in Guildford Street, went strolling about from place to place, sometimes with his mother, but occasionally acting alone. Of this time there are several authentic anecdotes preserved, which it is nevertheless difficult to attribute to any particular year. They range from the time when the boy was twelve till he was fourteen years of age. In

this interval, he is known to have spoken Rolla's address to the Peruvians at Covent Garden, for the benefit of Mr. Knight (the manager of the Liverpool theatre); but being hoarse on account of his having previously recited several speeches at the Sans Souci, he received no applause. This was probably about 1799 or 1800. The Sans Souci here referred to was a little theatre or exhibition-room in Leicester Place (the same, we believe, formerly rented by the celebrated Dibdin), where readings were given, and poetry and speeches recited. Sometimes there were moving scenes, similar to the Dioramas given in modern pantomimes, with voices issuing from behind, reciting poetry descriptive of the scenes that were passing. There were also, about the same time, similar establishments at the Crown and Anchor, at some rooms near Lincoln's Inn Fields, and in Chancery Lane;

at one or more of which places Kean appeared. He is said, in fact, to have read the whole of "The Merchant of Venice" at the Rolls' Rooms, Chancery Lane, where he was announced as "The infant prodigy, Master Carey." The late Mrs. Plumtre, (who was very intimate with Kean, in his later life,) speaking one day of the entertainments in Leicester Place, said, "I used to be very much pleased with the person who spoke the poetry at the Sans Souci." "Do you wish to know who it was that spouted that poetry?" said Kean, turning over head and heels in his drawing-room in Clarges Street, "Know, then,—'twas I."

When he was about fourteen, he recited Rolla's address (which seems to have been a favorite with him) at Sadler's Wells. He was also seen there as a spectator, at the time when Belzoni (afterwards the well-known and indefatigable traveller) was exhi-

biting there as a posturer ; but it does not appear that he was retained permanently by any of the theatres. He was oftener to be found a member of one or other of those irregular troops,—Richardson's, Saunders's, Scowton's, &c.,—who wander about, like bands of Arabs, from fair to market, and from country to town, bewitching the eyes and hearts and money of the unenlightened ; and reaping just sufficient from each exhibition to drive famine from the door. In these encampments, Kean, or rather “ Master Carey,” as he still continued to be called, was wont to perform various feats on horseback and the tight rope, as well as in “ the regular drama ;” and upon one occasion (this is said to have happened at Bartholomew Fair) he injured his shins so severely whilst riding in the ring, that his legs, (otherwise exceedingly well-shaped,) never entirely recovered their original beauty.

There was always an enlargement of the bone, or a projection of some sort, in front of the legs just over the instep, not however of sufficient magnitude to amount to a deformity, or in fact observable on a casual survey.

At what precise period of his life Kean was at Madeira is unknown; but that he was there once appears certain. The fact rests upon more than one statement, and is confirmed by his own assertions—with a difference; he himself insisting that he went out as a midshipman, and the other accounts stating that he was entered as a cabin boy. Both agree, however, in the circumstance of his having been left at the land whence “London particular” is derived, in a state of extreme sickness, and of his return, after a brief absence, to England and the unlimited delights of a stroller’s life.

It must have been after this that he first

cast his eyes on the bonnie blue hills of Scotland. In one of those indiscreet moments, such as tempt rustics to forsake their friend the plough for the questionable honour of serving King William in a military capacity, he enlisted himself as a member of a ragged company of comedians, which was then traversing the prudent land of North Britain; waging war upon the pockets of the kail-gatherers, and extracting, as it turned out, exceedingly small portions of "siller" therefrom. By way of diversion, Kean (who became tired, in the course of time, even of the luxuries of brose and oatmeal) struck out an acquaintance with a gentleman who had a passion for racing. At the time of our hero's introduction to him, this person had engaged in a match, where the owners were to ride their own horses. Kean's acquaintance, however, being disabled from using horse exercise,

suggested that our hero should be his substitute; which being agreed to, the new jockey mounted with alacrity, whipped and spurred with all his characteristic energy, and finally—lost the match with more than ordinary spirit. That he should have done this, notwithstanding he was opposed by *gentlemen* riders (a race who, for talent, may be compared to private actors), is an achievement that ought not to be forgotten. It is a curious feature in the story, that this discomfiture should have drawn closer the link between Kean and his new ally. Their acquaintance afterwards warmed into an intimacy, and the player-boy, for a time, lived with his friend, until the pecuniary circumstances of the latter driving him into confinement in Holyrood-house, the amicable partnership was dissolved.

During his stay in Scotland, and whilst he was strolling with the company to which

he was attached (it was Moss's company, we believe), he and his confederates were repeatedly reduced to the last degree of poverty. Cold and hunger were their companions; empty houses and supercilious looks their bitter fortune. They were all alike, tragedy, comedy, opera, and farce, "sisters four,"—equally wretched and helpless. In this republic of misfortune, the manager himself was merely a man—a fellow as hungry and penniless as the rest—with no right beyond the others, except to suffer with double the patience of his followers. In their extremity, a person with whom Kean had made acquaintance, clubbed with some friends, and sent them a purse, containing several pounds. It was like water in the desert, and saved them from utter despair.

Acting, however, was not Kean's "sole ambition and serene employ;" for in the course of his tour through Scotland, he

imagined himself to be attached to a young girl, and in fact agreed to marry her. The impression remained but a short time, however; for on his return to London, he very speedily dismissed the damsel from his mind, (he knew the line—

“At *lovers'* perjuries, they say, Jove laughs,”)

and threw his whole heart into the lap of a certain Miss Maria Germain, who was at that time apprenticed to his aunt, Mrs. Price. Mrs. Price fomented this second love-fever. She was, in fact, very desirous that he should marry Maria; but there was some objection made to the match (we believe by Miss Carey), and Aunt Price's benevolent designs were ultimately thwarted. During the intimacy that existed between the young people (and it lasted for some time), “heaps of love-letters,” it is said, were written by both parties. The particulars of these little

missives have not reached us; otherwise we should certainly have ventured to embody one or two of them, as specimens of the simplicity of seventeen, in this our humble history.

It does not appear that Kean, in his early life, formed an acquaintance with any one who afterwards gained a reputation on the stage, with the single exception of Mr. Rae. Young Rae was the son of the matron of Saint George's Hospital; and his mother being well known to Mrs. Price, with whom Kean was often a resident, an intimacy arose and existed for a short time between the two boys. Whether the introduction to our hero begat in Rae a desire of theatrical distinction, or he was previously stage-struck, is unknown. It is most probable that, as Kean must have been a veteran actor at the commencement of this acquaintance, he inoculated his companion's mind

with the theatrical mania. It is known that the boys frequently acted together. Mrs. Price used to drink tea with Mrs. Rae now and then, and upon these occasions she took young Kean with her, who invariably armed himself with her yard measure, (the only sword which he could obtain,) and he and Rae alternately wielded it, as the necessities of their drama—the “*minor drama*”—demanded. Kean has repeatedly adverted to this old intimacy, and asserted that he was the person who originally “taught Alexander Rae the speech of Norval.” Poor Rae! he benefited little by the tuition. His head was intended for other purposes than for the comprehension of character.

We now arrive at the year 1804, at which time, we apprehend, Kean was about seventeen years of age.

“Mr. Kean,”—writes Mr. Jerrold, the well-known and talented author of ‘The Rent

Day,'—"Mr. Kean joined the Sheerness company on Easter Monday, 1804. He was then still in boy's costume. He opened in *George Barnwell*, and *Harlequin*, in a Pantomime. His salary was fifteen shillings per week. He then went under the name of Carey. He continued to play the whole round of tragedy, comedy, opera, farce, interlude, and pantomime, until the close of the season. His comedy was very successful. In *Watty Cockney* and *Risk*, and in the song 'Unfortunate Miss Bailey,' he made a great impression upon the tasteful critics of Sheerness. On leaving the place, he went to Ireland, and from Ireland to Mr. Baker's company at Rochester. It was about this time (as I have heard my father say, who had it from Kean himself) that Mr. Kean, being without money to pay the toll of a ferry, tied his wardrobe in his pocket-handkerchief, and swam the river."

It was in the course of the visit to Ireland, referred to by Mr. Jerrold, that Kean once trod the stage in company with Mrs. Siddons. He was acting at Belfast, when Mrs. Siddons, who was engaged for a few nights as a "star," arrived there.

There are two versions of this story. One is derived from Kean, and the other rests on very respectable authority. We shall venture to give them both, therefore, as they are short.

The first is this:—Mrs. Siddons was to open her engagement in *Zara*, Kean playing *Osmyn*. As usual, instead of learning his part, he employed the interim between her arrival and the play, in drinking with some friends, with such success, that when he came upon the stage, the whole of his part had vanished from his memory. He could not recollect more than two or three lines, and was therefore reduced to the necessity of inventing

as he went on:—it may easily be supposed with what effect. His performance was a tissue of nonsense; sentences without meaning; tawdry phrases; drunken absurdities of all sorts. His auditors, luckily, were not critical; but the “star” of the evening looked lowering upon him, and expressed her unmitigated disgust. The next play to be performed was *Douglas*, and in this Kean played *Young Norval* to Mrs. Siddons’s *Lady Randolph*. Whether he was ashamed of the past, or was ambitious of showing the great tragic actress that “he too was an actor,” we cannot say; but he played the part with infinite pathos and spirit. Mrs. Siddons was surprised into admiration. After the play (this is Kean’s own account) she came to him, and patting him on the head, said—“You have played very well, sir, *very* well. It’s a pity,—*but there’s too little of you to do any thing.*” The reader will smile over this prophecy, and its refutation.

The next story runs as follows :--Mrs. Siddons was to appear in one of her great characters ; but when the time came for rehearsing the play, she was so unwell or fatigued with travelling, that it was requested, as a favour, that the company would meet at her lodgings to go through the ceremony of rehearsal. This was acceded to, and the performers accordingly recited their several portions of dialogue before her, in that style which, as the critics say, "calls for no particular remark." There was one exception, however, to this easy mode of delivery, and that was in the person of the little man who was to play one of the secondary characters. He did not, it seems, think it sufficient to mar the poetry of Shakspeare, after the fashion of our modern professors of elocution. He was ambitious of *illustrating* the text. And accordingly, although he had not a great deal to do, he endeavoured to do his

best. Whilst the other players went through their parts, the great actress looked on and listened; now and then correcting their emphasis or accent, or suggesting some alteration; but when the little man spoke, she gazed at him very stedfastly, and, on his ceasing, said in her grave and weighty manner—"Very well, sir—very well. I have never heard that part given in the same way before." The "little man" was Kean. It was once said of him, in ridicule, when he was playing the trifling part of Carney, in *Ways and Means*,—"He's trying to act: the little fellow's making a part of Carney." We can easily imagine that the same thing might have been said of him in this instance; "He's trying to make a part of ——." And so he *was*! And so he did in Shylock, and in Richard, and in Othello—and *he succeeded*! And it was this "trying to make a part," or, in other words, in these strenuous endeavours

to penetrate and incorporate himself with the characters which he represented, that bore him upwards to the topmost step of the tragic drama.

(1805). Returning from Ireland, our hero entered into an engagement with Mr. Baker, the manager of the Rochester Theatre, and afterwards, during the same year, played at Dover, and other small towns in that part of England. Amongst other places, he had engaged to act for a night or two at Braintree, in Essex; but on the day fixed for his appearance, he found himself in the county of Kent, with the River Thames between him and the rest of the performers. What to do, was the question. He had arrived at the river, it is true, but he had not a *sous* in his pocket; and he disdained (as we may imagine) assailing the grim Charon of the Thames with any vain importunities. A few years afterwards, and he might have com-

manded the ferryman's services by the mere mention of his name: "*CÆSAREM vehis!*" But at this period Fashion had not "marked him for her own." He was compelled to call physical instead of "metaphysical aid" to his service. Stripping himself, therefore, without delay, he tied his clothes in his pocket-handkerchief, and seizing the bundle with his teeth, plunged into the river. After huge exertions, he reached the opposite shore. Unluckily, in the course of his passage, his head repeatedly sank, so that by the time he had arrived on the Essex side of the river, his clothes were completely saturated with water. There was no time for consideration or refreshment, even if his finances had allowed him the opportunity of resorting to any public-house in the neighbourhood. The manager awaited him; the Braintree audience (like metropolitan and other audiences) were not to be cheated

out of their due respect. The little swimmer, therefore, after a few unsuccessful struggles, forced his limbs into his dripping clothes, and set forward stoutly for Braintree. He arrived there, wet, hungry, and worn out with fatigue; performed (or rather attempted to perform) *Rolla*, and—fainted away upon the stage! The consequences of this day's labour were a fever and ague, which kept him in his bed for some considerable time, and finally left him as penniless as when he crossed the unrelenting Thames; and richer in nothing, save in the power of telling, in after years, the watery adventure which we have here ventured to put upon record.

(1806). The year 1806 brought him once more to London. He obtained, through the medium of Miss Tidswell, an engagement to play "small parts" at the Haymarket Theatre. At this time his old acquaintance Rae was the principal tragedian there; and

the reader is requested to observe (if possible, without smiling) the relative stations which the two players then occupied in the drama.

Everybody knows "The Iron Chest." It is notorious that there is only one part in it worth playing, namely, that of Sir Edward Mortimer. There are, indeed, some second-rate characters—such as Wilford, Adam Winterton, Sampson Rawbold, Blanche, and Helen ; but the rest are parts to be walked over, or played by "amateurs" (we can go no lower)—a certain mob of names or references, in which candle-snuffers and persons of similar occupation now and then condescend to show themselves, to the prejudice of the general brilliancy of the theatre. In this drama, Rae—the mouthing, ranting, inefficient Rae—played the *only* part, Sir Edward Mortimer ; and Kean was thought worthy to represent—PETER ! In "John Bull," our hero gave substance to the cha-

racter of SIMON, "*nominis umbra*," in which he had a satisfactory opportunity of doing nothing ; whilst his coteremporaries, Fawcett, De Camp, Mrs. Glover, and Mrs. Gibbs, did all the real work of the comedy. In "Ways and Means" he played *Carney* (we have alluded to this already). In "Mrs. Wiggins" he played *the Waiter* ! In "The Prisoner at large" he was *the Landlord* ! In "The Heir at Law" he was *John, servant to Lord Duberley* ! In "She would and she would not" he was *an Alguazil* ; and in "Speed the Plough" he was—what ?—the FIDDLER !! Whilst Rae, whose star was then in the ascendant, played *Hamlet*, Kean enacted ROSENCRANTZ ! When Rae was *Count Almariva*, Kean was again AN ALGUAZIL !! And when Rae, in "The Battle of Hexham," played *Gondibert* (beyond comparison the principal part), Kean was a—FIFER !!! Does not Fortune shuffle our cards in a curious

and inexplicable way? Seven or eight years afterwards—but we shall come to that presently. In the meantime, let us follow the course of time.

(1807). “In 1807,” to use Mr. Jerrold’s words once more (we cannot do better than quote them), “Mr. Kean again appeared at Sheerness: salary one guinea per week. He opened in *Alexander the Great*. An officer in one of the stage boxes annoyed him by frequently exclaiming—‘Alexander the little.’ At length, making use of his (even then) impressive and peculiar powers, Mr. Kean folded his arms, and approached the intruder, who again sneeringly repeated—‘Alexander the Little,’ and with a vehemence of manner and a glaring look, that appalled the offender, retorted ‘Yes,—with a GREAT SOUL!’ In the farce of the ‘Young Hussar,’ which followed, one of the actresses fainted, in consequence of the powerful acting

of Mr. Kean. He continued at that time, and even in such a place, to increase in favour, and was very generally followed, when, at the commencement of 1808, in consequence of some misunderstanding with one of the townspeople, he was compelled to seek the protection of a magistrate from a press-gang employed to take him. Having played four nights, the extent of time guaranteed by the magistrate (Mr. Shrove, of Queenborough), Mr. Kean made his escape, with some difficulty, on board the Chatham boat, having lain *perdu* in various places, until a nocturnal hour of sailing.—We thank the gods (not “amiss,” we hope) that he escaped the fangs of the man-hunters.

In this, his second engagement with the Sheerness company, Kean appears to have been willing as well as able to “turn his hand to any thing.” Observe what a versatile Alexander the Great the company possessed.

Mr. Jerrold is continuing his narrative,—
“The models of the tricks for the pantomime of ‘Mother Goose,’ as played at Sheerness, were made by Mr. Kean, out of matches, pins, and paper. He also furnished a programme of business and notes, showing how many of the difficulties might be avoided for so small an establishment as that of Sheerness. In allusion to the trick of “the odd fish,” in particular, he writes—“If you do not think it worth while to go to the expense of a dress, if the Harlequin be clever, he may jump into the sea, and restore the egg.”

There is not much to admire, probably, in this variety of labour, except the extreme activity of the mind which induced it. Kean’s talent was of the true sort ; it was neither exclusive nor penurious. He could afford to waste it upon trifles ; he could shift its aspect, and still show that it was bright. In the consciousness of his intellectual wealth,

—in the vigour and activity of his spirit, he did things from which a less gifted person would have recoiled. It is an unfailing sign of poverty, when a man below his zenith is perpetually cavilling and standing upon his petty rights and imaginary dignities; and it is equally a test of genius (which implies abundance) to forget these unimportant privileges; to show itself upon all occasions; to give forth its high qualities without stint or measure; conscious that nothing except meanness can degrade it, and that the spring from which it flows can never be exhausted.

CHAPTER IV.

ENTERS BEVERLEY'S COMPANY—A BLANK BENEFIT
—HIS INTRODUCTION TO MISS CHAMBERS—DI-
GRESSION (ELLISTONIANA)—REFUSES TO ACT
WITH MASTER BETTY—RUNS AWAY—HIS COURT-
SHIP—AND MARRIAGE.

(1808.) IN March, 1808, Kean arrived at Gloucester, accompanied by a friend, without any theatrical engagements on his hands, but calculating probably on finding some provincial company either there or in the neighbourhood. He was not mistaken; for Beverley's company of actors were in the town, and Kean was shortly enrolled amongst them. Beverley and his wife,—the first a clever representative of Yorkshire and other rustics, and the lady a heroine of formidable proportions,—led the troop. There was also

amongst them Mr. Hughes ("Jack Hughes," as he is or was termed by his familiars), who now figures on the London boards.

The success of this company was not eminent. The respectable people of Gloucester are either below or above that pitch of refinement when good acting is sought after; or else (the alternative is inevitable) Mr. Beverley and his comedians were bad in the positive degree. They produced no money; the office of treasurer became a sinecure. The theatrical chest, that grand reservoir for provincial shillings and sixpences, was a mere "exhausted receiver,"—an ugly, ghostly, empty memento of the silver age, which seemed to have fled away for ever. The manager's Saturday-night arithmetic was an incumbrance to him; he could draw nothing but imaginary balances, and take credit only for good intentions. In this hungry season, when there

was a failure of the general harvest, it occurred to the sufferers that something might still be forced, perhaps, out of the usual course; at all events, it was necessary to make the experiment. Two of them therefore resolved to take a benefit: Kean and Jack Hughes were the adventurers. They put up "Cure the Heart-Ache" (a play implying hope, at least), and Kean was to enact *Young Rapid*. The bills were printed and distributed with more than ordinary diligence; the doors were unclosed, the lamps lighted, the curtain drawn up, when, behold!—in boxes, pit, and gallery, there appeared the staggering sum of *one shilling and sixpence* in hard cash! A privy council was held; and it was resolved to extinguish the lights with all possible speed, and not to "waste the midnight oil" for the gratification of their two spectators. Kean and Hughes therefore came forward, hand

in hand, bowed in dumb show, and retired. The whole of the evening's performance was condensed into this pantomime; except that they afterwards (very reluctantly) returned their visitors the eighteen pence that lay at the bottom of the money-taker's box. That night, as parliamentary reporters say, there was "no house." It is tolerably clear that there was no "Cure for the *Heart-ache*."

The reader is now approaching a serious event in our hero's life, namely—his marriage. His first introduction to Miss Chambers, afterwards his wife, was at Gloucester. She was then an amateur performer (a performer receiving no pay) in Beverley's company. She was standing on the stage, ready to rehearse the part of *Mrs. Mortimer*, in the comedy of "Laugh when you can," when Kean, who was to play SAMBO, the Black, stepped forward. Inquiring who "that shabby little man with such brilliant eyes"

was, she was told that his name was Kean; the manager adding, at the same time, with superfluous civility—"he is very clever."

We are sorry to say, that Sambo that night acquitted himself very indifferently. He did not know a syllable of his part. He plunged and floundered amongst the sentences, casting up such a foam of words as bewildered every body. He was never right, even by accident. He not only spoiled the part of Sambo, but that of Mrs. Mortimer also. So effectively bad was he, that Miss Chambers's discontent made itself manifest in reproaches. "It is very shameful, Sir," said she, "that you should come upon the stage and not know a word of your part. You have quite spoiled my play." The incorrigible Sambo turned on his heel without replying; but went up to the manager, and asked with an emphasis, "Who the *devil* is that?"

The extempore method of playing which Kean employed in this representation of Sambo, recalls to our mind a story which we heard some years ago, from another Roscius, the *American* Roscius—Mr. John Howard Payne. We hope that it will not seem out of place here.

The late Robert William Elliston (when will that rich book, '*Ellistoniana*,' be published?) was, at one period of his curious life, manager of two—we believe the Manchester and Birmingham—theatres. Being in London, he was, as a matter of course, beating up for recruits. To get the best actors at the smallest possible sums, was the supreme object of his wishes. He bargained—failed—succeeded—and underwent all the chances of a collector of rarities. Amongst other persons, he encountered Payne. He was overjoyed to see him. To inquire into his health, to state his own exigencies, and to give him a pressing invitation to

Manchester, was the work of a moment. "My dear fellow, come down to us! see us! hear us! mark us! observe—a—how we '*do* the thing' at our good theatre of Manchester—ha, ha!" Payne answered and said, that having nothing to do, he would very willingly run down to his country theatre, but protested against playing himself. "I have forgotten all my old characters now," said he, "so that playing is out of the question. However, I shall be happy to come down and see you." The manager reiterated his pressing invitations, and Payne accordingly "run down" to Manchester. Arriving at night, he beheld Elliston in his glory. He was the first man of the place. He managed, acted, directed, corrected every body. His theatre was the best theatre in the universe, and he was the best man in it. On the morning following, there was a rehearsal of "Richard the Third." Elliston

(amongst other sins) at that time used to murder our third Richard. This morning however, ("being busy," as he said), he invited Payne to rehearse for him. "Perhaps you will *play* Richard, too?" said he, in that drawling, chuckling tone of comedy, which so much became him. Payne assured him that this was totally out of the question; but that, as he (Elliston) was busy, he would try, with the prompter's help—who was requested to be loud enough—to blunder through the mere rehearsal. He began—

"To day the winter of our discontent
Is made—made—"

The prompter came in — "Is made new summer"—

"Is made new summer by the sun of York,
And all the storms that lowered upon our house,
Are"—gone—vanished—hidden——what is it?

The true prompter came in again, and again, and again; but to no good purpose. The

head of the American Roscius held many clever things, but unluckily the part of Richard the Third was not amongst them. He, therefore, resolved to put an end to the absurdity, and turned round to address Elliston with—"You see it is utterly hopeless for me"—when he found that the manager was not there. He had gone, with a promise to return directly. Under these circumstances, poor Payne toiled through the play, and at the conclusion, seeing Elliston at his elbow once more, he addressed him with, "You perceive how utterly ridiculous it would have been, had I accepted your invitation to *play* the part. I have not been able to remember three consecutive lines!" The manager's face expanded: he swore that he was horribly amazed. "My dear fellow, you are not in earnest? I'm *sure* you are not. You are all over the town by this time,—in large letters—"For this night only, the part of RICHARD *by*—THE CELEBRATED

AMERICAN ROSCIUS, MR. JOHN HOWARD PAYNE. You *must* play for us to-night.” —“ It is totally impossible,” replied Payne, angrily, “ I cannot, and will not expose myself. What could possess you to do this, when you saw——?” —“ My dear fellow, I saw you going on with the part, as I thought, excellently—swimmingly—*triumphantly*. Come, come! the thing is done: ’tis too late to undo it; play you *must*—nay, you *shall*. What! not oblige an old *friend*—an old *admirer*?” &c. &c. What could be done? men haven’t hearts of stone! The exigency was great, and Payne consented. “ And how did you get through the part?” said we to him, when he had told the story. “ Why really better than I could have imagined. I studied all day, and at night gave as much of the part as I could recollect.” —“ But when you could not recollect?” persisted we. “ Why,” said he, “ I spouted something *like* Shakspeare (!) and, to tell

you the truth, the people seemed to think my imitation better than the original; for I roared it out twice as loud as the legitimate text, and it drew down thunders of applause." —It was after this fashion, we presume, that the oblivious Sambo recited "something like" the text of *his* author; not, however, with such fortunate effect.

Return we now to our history.

On the second night of Miss Chambers and Kean acting together, "John Bull" was the play performed. The gentleman was *Job Thornberry*, and the lady was *Mary*. But what a change of circumstances! Mr. Thornberry was perfect, whilst the gentle Mary rivalled the forgetfulness of Sambo. It is to the honour of our hero, that he did not retort his fair antagonist's reproaches, but received her apologies (which were profuse), after the play was over, with "superior smiles" and infinite good humour.

Kean's performance of Thornberry was so good on this occasion, that Watson, a veteran actor, and proprietor of the Gloucester Theatre, (for it was hired only by Beverley's company for a short period), asked—"Who's that young man who played Job Thornberry? He's a capital actor, and some day or other he'll be a great man."

Good acting, however, was not sufficient to entice Gloucester audiences. In order, therefore, to effect this, and to renovate their still shattered finances, Beverley resolved to get up for representation "Tekeli" and "Mother Goose." In the preparation of these things, Kean was the master spirit. He was the director of the whole corps. He taught them to fight—to march—to dance—and, in short, the whole dumb show. He attended at Miss Chambers's lodging (the manager wishing her to attempt the part of Columbine) and instructed her in all the pan-

tomimic evolutions. And, to consummate all, he himself filled the two principal parts of *Tekeli* and *Harlequin*! His dance in "Mother Goose," with Beverley (the clown), stirred even the people of Gloucester into a ferment of admiration. And in "Tekeli," the combat, invented by our hero, was, according to all account, a fine, and even marvellous exhibition. To use the words of an eye-witness—"The fight in Tekeli was splendid. It called down thunders of applause. The effect is even now quite fresh in my mind. I never saw anything like it." The reader who remembers the grace and energy of Kean, in the encounters of Richard and Macbeth, will easily believe in the gladiatorial excellence of Tekeli.

In this manner about three months passed away, at the expiration of which time, the company prepared to move to Stroud. As to Kean and Miss Chambers, they privately

agreed to perform together in the very serious drama called "Matrimony." *He* was captivated by her liveliness, and *she* forgot his first "shabby" appearance at the rehearsal, in the lustre of his eyes, and in the daily contemplation of his genius.

At Stroud, he continued to lead in every department. Amongst other things, he played *Archer*, in the "Beaux Stratagem," indifferently (not knowing half of his part), and *Lord Hastings*, in "Jane Shore," very finely. His salary here was a guinea a-week. The people of Stroud, it seems, preferred farces and pantomimes to either comedies or tragedies; but their preference was free from any indiscretion—never amounting to enthusiasm, and (what was worse) never by any chance filling the theatre. The house itself was small, holding about £30 at the utmost; and at this period the receipts averaged from £7 to £10 per night. Beverley could barely

pay his hungry company. He wished to do more; and therefore wrote to London, and invited Master Betty, then just risen into notice, to come and make known his merits to the critics of Stroud, in Gloucestershire.

Betty accepted the invitation, came down accordingly, and was speedily proclaimed in as large type as the Stroud printer could furnish. "Douglas" and "Hamlet" were the two first tragedies in which he was to appear, and the announcements ran thus—*Norval*, Master Betty—*Glenalvon*, Mr. Kean—*Lady Randolph*, Miss Chambers; and *Hamlet*, Master Betty—*Laertes*, Mr. Kean. This announcement suited Master Betty very well; but it did not suit the little man who was required to play second to him. *His* mind was very speedily made up upon the subject. He did not indeed make any ostentatious display of his intentions; but he was not the less thoroughly determined to

slip quietly out of the whole affair, and leave Messrs. Betty and Beverley to fight through Douglas and Hamlet by themselves in the best way that they could. Having come to this resolution, he was not the man to break it. He set off, unknown to any one, boiling over with indignation at the supposed insult offered to him, and for three days and two nights the answer to all inquiries was the same—"He is not to be found!" The affairs of the theatre were injured; the manager was angry; and some people were alarmed. Thoughts were even entertained of dragging the ponds of the neighbourhood, for the body of the lost Laertes. On the third day, Miss Chambers, who began to be very uneasy at his prolonged absence, determined to make one more attempt to recover her estray. She accordingly despatched another messenger (several had been sent out already in vain) with directions to scour the country, and to bring him in at all

events, dead or alive. The man had not far to proceed ; for after walking a mile or thereabouts, on the road towards—we forget what place—he encountered the truant tragedian returning homewards, in dismal plight, but seemingly in as high dudgeon as ever. He walked straight to Miss Chambers's house, and, to her inquiry of—"Mr. Kean, where *have* you been?" replied, "In the fields—in the woods. I am starved. I have eaten nothing—nothing but turnips and cabbages, since I've been out ; but I'll go again, to-morrow—and again—and as often as I see myself put up in such characters." And he concluded this speech by saying (or swearing) that he would not "play second to any man living, except to John Kemble."

Life, however, was not all made up of these uneven places. There were some calm, Elysian moments, in which he had leisure to make

love. He would go (in the evening, generally) to Miss Chambers's house, and,—besides the innumerable tender things which their peculiar situation demanded (we presume thus much),—he amused himself and his affianced, by mimicking John Kemble and various performers, and by singing after the manner of Kelly, Incledon, and Braham, and other famous vocalists. In the presence of his one auditor, his success was, no doubt (to use the language of the bills), “unprecedented!” He studied, however, in the midst of all this devotion; and when any great character required his attention, he threw his whole thoughts into it. The account we have received (and we can rely upon it) is—“He used to mope about for hours, walking miles and miles alone, with his hands in his pockets, thinking intensely on his characters. No one could get a word from him. He

studied and *slaved* beyond any actor I ever knew." Is not this the key, to show how it was that he excelled, as he did, in the wonderful characters of Shakspeare?

July, 1808.—But let us conclude this part of our biography. Master Betty did not draw the houses which were expected. Beverley's company, therefore, broke up, and Kean, Miss Chambers, and others, went to play with Watson's company at Cheltenham. Here they played *without pay*, Kean enacting Octavian and other characters, until (for it seems to have been a state of probation) the admiration that his performances excited gave him an irresistible claim upon Watson's treasury. We understand that it was about a fortnight after the migration of Kean from Stroud to Cheltenham, that he and Miss Chambers set off one fine morning for the former place, in a returned postchaise. They

were accompanied by Miss Chambers's sister, and by a Mr. White (a friend of Kean) and before they returned to Cheltenham, which they did on the same day, Edmund Kean and Maria Chambers were—man and wife.

CHAPTER V.

ACTS AT CHELTENHAM—AT WARWICK—AT WALSALL—JOINS THE BIRMINGHAM COMPANY—STEPHEN KEMBLE—OUR HERO ATTACKS THE MAIL COACH—JOURNEY ON FOOT FROM BIRMINGHAM TO SWANSEA.

KEAN, raised by the magic of the Rev. Mr. ———'s words, from his degree of bachelor to that of "Kean the married man," came back with his young wife to Cheltenham to seek a fresh engagement. Beverley, the manager, was there, and was about to make terms with the supposed Miss Chambers, when the fact of the marriage becoming known, he frowned upon the nuptials so lately celebrated, and abandoned her and her husband altogether, saying that he would have "nothing to do with either of them."

After a short time spent at Cheltenham, therefore, Mr. and Mrs. Kean proceeded to Warwick, where the husband obtained an engagement, and received a guinea per week for his services. He produced very little effect there, and in fact played but few parts of note; the principal characters (especially in comedy, the best-beloved) being occupied by a certain large, tall, light-haired Mr. Waring, who appropriated most of the applause to himself. Mr. Chatterley also was a great man in this company, and Mr. Mason (was he not a relation of Mrs. Siddons?) was a tolerably great man; but Kean was esteemed a person of no account. Upon one occasion, indeed, he played *Lothaire*, in Monk Lewis's tragedy of *Adelgitha*, to Chatterley's Guiscard (the real hero) and Mason's Michael Ducas; but in general he was unemployed and dissatisfied. He very willingly therefore took his departure for Walsall, where he

arrived in the month of September, entered Watson's company, and commenced his career in his since celebrated character of Richard the Third. At this small place he took a benefit, and cleared about twelve pounds by it. He thought the sum a fortune, and with it in his pocket he, in October, 1808, quitted Walsall, and, full of high anticipations, proceeded to Birmingham.

Birmingham contains a large and respectable theatre, and here Mr. and Mrs. Kean stayed full four months, *each* of them at a guinea a week salary. They were still in Watson's company, which however was now enlarged. He reckoned amongst his leaders the aforesaid Mr. (and also a Mrs.) Chatterley, Mr. and Mrs. Waring (the lady with a voice like a giant's), Mr. Vandenhoff, then passing by the name of Villars, and others. They got on pretty well till March, 1809, when the company set out for Lich-

field, at which place they remained six or seven weeks, without accomplishing anything that is worthy of mention. On their return to Birmingham in May, they found that Stephen Kemble had been engaged to come and shine amongst them, "as a *star*!" This gentleman played Falstaff, tolerably,—Lear, in which his handsome face told more in his favour than his acting,—and also Richard the Third, in which he involved himself in an unforeseen dilemma. For, after having knelt to Lady Anne for her love (our friend was fat!) he found himself fixed to the floor by dint of his own gravitation. In this dilemma, he was compelled to lay aside the tyrant, and sue to his victim for help. Our informant remembers hearing him say, "Help me up! help me up!" in tones painfully energetic. Kean himself went into the front of the house to see the great Stephen *fill* this character, and roared at the exhibition.

When Stephen Kemble acted *Lear*, Kean played the part of *Edgar* respectably—a little more perhaps; and when Stephen was *Falstaff*, Kean topped the part of *Hotspur*, with such spirit and effect, that Stephen said to him, “You have played the character of *Hotspur*, sir, as well as Mr. John Kemble.” And he afterwards asserted, in the fulness of his satisfaction, that Henry the Fourth was better played in Birmingham than in London, “even with my brother John in it.” Kean was in rapture at these compliments, as may well be imagined; and upon the strength of them, he made an advance, and endeavoured to get into Stephen’s company. He failed, however, being either too bad or too *good*, (or from some other cause unknown to us,) and was compelled to continue at Birmingham. Here he went on playing his endless variety of parts; sometimes patiently enough, but at others breaking out into bitter

execrations at his own ill-fortune, and at the success of others who passed him in the road to fame. He was not without the actor's solace—applause, however. He forced the people of Birmingham to yield up their tribute of admiration to him in some of his characters. In *Octavian*, in the Mountaineers, more particularly, they admitted that he was '*better than Elliston!*' Lest the reader should smile at the compliment, we think it necessary to inform him that Elliston was in those days a great tragedian—in Birmingham.

About this time, the salary of our hero was raised temporarily from a guinea to thirty shillings a week, on condition of his acting Harlequin, in addition to his usual work. His expenses however were with difficulty kept down, and in the end they exceeded his income. Nevertheless, he became better known, and was not without temptations to

play in various provincial theatres. Amongst others, he received an invitation from a little stuttering man, who was manager of a small theatre near Birmingham. This person requested him to specify his line of parts. Kean replied, "Richard, Othello, Hamlet," &c. The little manager would not hear of it. "If John Kemble came down," said he, "he should not have them. *They are mine!*" "What do you think of the impudence of this fellow?" said Kean to his wife; "he wants *me* to play second parts,—and *to him!*" She tried to quiet him, but his blood was on the ferment, and he threatened the ambitious manager in terms that left no doubt of his intentions to inflict memorable punishment upon him. He even set out with the intention of finding him, but failing, and having in the course of his expedition stopped at some alluring alehouse (to refresh his indignation), he attacked a mail coach which was

stopping to change horses, seized the leaders by their heads, and after a magnificent struggle was duly lodged in the hands of "the guardian of the night." This fellow, who sympathised with a man "in drink," instead of giving him into the cold custody of the watchhouse, coaxed him homewards, and finally delivered him safely at his lodgings, into the care of his expecting landlady. The landlady tried the same method of treatment that the watchman had adopted with such success; but whether Kean had had enough of sweets already or not, he resented them now with becoming spirit, and not finding that she abandoned her importunities, he concluded by taking up his tormentor (a large heavy woman, of we know not how many stone) in his arms, and endeavoured to throw her out of her own window. We rejoice to say that the lady escaped, either by virtue of her own weight, or the

weight of Mrs. Kean's arguments ; and the tragedian was induced at last, through the entreaties of his wife, to go quietly to bed and forget himself till morning.

Kean had now been a long time at Birmingham, when, anxious to better his bad fortune, he listened to overtures from Cherry, the manager of the Swansea theatre, and finally accepted an engagement to lead the business there, at five-and-twenty shillings a-week. Having arranged the terms, there remained only one difficulty, and that was how to get to Swansea. Kean and his wife (now near her accouchement, and, consequently, unfit to encounter much fatigue) had about one hundred and fifty miles to travel, and their fortune was—to use a phrase rather expressive than classical—considerably worse than nothing. In short, they were fifteen pounds in debt, and had not sixpence in their pockets. Kean's

invention was at the ebb. He thought of pledging some superfluities. Alas, there were none ! His theatrical friends ? They were as poor as he. What was to be done ? In such dilemmas the woman's wit is always foremost. His wife stepped in to his relief. She proposed that he should state his difficulty to Cherry, and request a few pounds in advance. This is not an unusual thing with country performers, a small sum being often advanced, and afterwards deducted, by weekly instalments, from their salaries. Kean therefore wrote to Cherry, and received from him—two pounds ! With this sum he could not of course pay all his debts ; but a week's lodging then due, amounting to ten shillings, and some other trifling debts, were *necessarily* to be discharged ; these paid, the tragedian and his wife found that they had not quite twenty shillings in their purse, and the whole long and unknown road to Swansea before them.

They set out. It was four o'clock on a fine July morning, when they shook the dust of Birmingham from their feet, and commenced their journey *on foot* towards Bristol. Their poverty compelled them to be thus early risers; for creditors at Birmingham, like those in other places, have quick eyes and "flinty hearts." They walked slowly (for Mrs. Kean was now very infirm), and arranged that they should travel about ten or twelve miles a-day, if possible. Kean, dressed in blue from head to foot, with his dark sharp resolute face, a black stock, and four swords over his shoulder (suspending the family bundle of clothes,) looked like a poor little navy lieutenant, whom the wars had left on half-pay and penniless, trudging on, with his wife, to his native village. This resemblance (for it is not an imagination of ours) procured them from time to time some little attentions, and always commanded

respect. After walking a few miles, they sat down by the way-side to rest. Kean, perceiving a small river near the spot, delivered up the swords and bundle to his wife, and, after finding a convenient place, plunged in the water, and swam about for a few minutes. This, with the exception of a single meal, was all the refreshment they had till the evening, when they found themselves at a village about twelve miles from Birmingham. A very humble supper and a cheap bed concluded the day. The following days, the

“ To-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow ”

passed in the same fatiguing and cheerless manner. They did not meet with an adventure. All that they particularly noted was, that the space between themselves and Bristol narrowed very slowly, and that their money was rapidly diminishing.

At last they arrived at Bristol, without a penny. They chose a small public house to put up at, "The Mulberry-tree," and entered into an anxious consultation as to their "ways and means;" the result of which was that Kean determined to write to Cherry for a second advance. It may easily be imagined that the interval between their letter and Cherry's reply was passed uncomfortably enough; but there was no help for it. They had walked a hundred miles, and they had still eighty more to travel, before they could reach Swansea. It was impossible to accomplish this without money, and to raise money upon the little articles of dress which they had with them was equally past hope; for they had none to spare. Even the swords (and they were not of Damascus) would be required when they arrived at Swansea, for the immediate business of the theatre; and there was nothing else which the harshest

scrutiny could have pronounced superfluous. After four or five days' expectation, however, Cherry's letter arrived. It enclosed two pounds more. Out of this sum they paid their five days' bill at "The Mulberry Tree," amounting to twenty-five shillings, and with the remaining fifteen, started on the same evening for Swansea.

It was not long before they came to at a small knot of houses by the river Avon, (could this have been Clifton Hot-wells?) when going into a public house for the purpose of taking tea, they found that a boat, bound to Newport, was likely to pass in the course of the evening. They comforted themselves with the tea, and afterwards wore away the time by walking to and fro by the side of the river, watching for the Newport boat. This occupied them till ten o'clock. At that hour, a little vessel, laden with hemp and tar, and other things infinitely more

useful than fragrant, arrived. It was dark, and the master (or captain) of the vessel was not inclined to stop for the sake of two poor players. However, Kean's rhetoric prevailed in the end, and the man agreed to take them, for five shillings, to Newport. They embarked. The boat was very small, as we have said; it was, moreover, completely occupied by its load, and gave out from every part a detestable odour. There was no bed in it, nor refreshment of any kind. Mrs. Kean, who was in great and increasing pain, and apprehensive, in fact, of a sudden confinement, lay down upon a coil of ropes, but was unable to sleep. Kean himself walked the deck all night with the master of the boat, mistaken no longer, we apprehend, for a naval officer; for the salt-water wits very speedily make out to which element a passenger belongs. Thus they sailed on steadily, but slowly; and at nine

in the morning the vessel swung into Newport, and discharged its theatrical cargo.

After breakfasting at Newport, where they found a "kind landlady" and clean quarters, they proceeded on foot to Cardiff. Here Mrs. Kean appeared so overcome by pain that her husband wished her to remain. She refused, however, with the pertinacity common, we are sorry to say, to the sex, and after dinner, (which consisted—the reader may be curious?—of cold salt beef,) the travellers set forward again. They walked from six o'clock in the evening till one in the morning, when they arrived, half dead with fatigue, at Cowbridge. To add to their distress, the public-house at this place was shut up, and all sober people were in bed. Kean announced his arrival by striking, with his four swords, at the inn door. Whether this had too military an effect, and sounded like

a summons to surrender, we do not know; but the landlady seemed reluctant to give an answer. At last, after repeated applications to the door, she came down, and inquired, *in Welsh*, who were there. Kean, in authoritative English, cried—"Open the door!" The woman retorted in Welsh, and appearances altogether seemed to favour the idea that the travellers would for that night sleep under no canopy save that of Canopus. Better things turned out, however. The landlady relented into English, and eventually showed herself worthy of belonging to that respectable country, whose antiquity is so strongly insisted on; and whose origin, in fact, appears to have been forgotten, even in the times when, according to the histories of the Chinese and the Jews, the foundations of the earth were laid. Nothing, in short, could be more kind than she was. She exerted herself in all ways; helping the lady into a comfortable bed, and placing a large piece of cold

meat and an ample jug of cider before our hero, who, it is but justice to say, did superlative honour to his Welsh entertainment.

Another morning rose upon our travellers. They arose, too, with the morning, and once more set forwards towards the odious Swansea, whose distance seemed to remain still perversely the same, like that of the never-ending horizon. Without breakfast, which their reduced finances would not now allow them to take, it may be supposed that they did not proceed very merrily. "Time and the hour," however, brought them, a little before mid-day, to a village school-house, where the mistress (happy in the absence of her scholars) supplied them with breakfast, and refused to take any money in return. It is not our business at present to pry into the small secrets of the human heart; otherwise, it might not be disadvantageous to inquire how much of this good school-mistress's

benevolence resulted from her that day's happy temperament. A key to the riddle would supply a system for the improvement of mankind, that could not too soon be entered upon. We ourselves cannot at present enter upon the subject. We are, indeed, well inclined to be philosophical, but we must refrain, seeing that some of our contemporaries occasionally muddy the stream of their narrative by profound paradoxes, and impenetrable observations on men and things. We must proceed and complete the Swansea journey, already, we fear, too long. Kean, revived by the school-mistress's fare, trudged on with renewed spirits. We know not what feat or combat (in Tekeli or Richard) he might have been meditating, when suddenly a man jumped out of the hedge, and asked peremptorily—"Is that your wife?" This is sometimes a very awkward question. It was not so in the present instance, indeed; notwith-

standing which, our hero declined a reply. His silence nourished the rogue's courage, who went on another length—"If she's *not*," said he, roughly, "she must come with me." The blood of Mrs. Kean, at this intimation, fell down to Zero, but the blood of the tragedian mounted. He unslung his bundle of swords, and taking one (it was his "Richard sword,") he unsheathed it in an instant, and was about to try its metal upon his new acquaintance, when that personage started off, and made his way over hedge and ditch, with an expectation that we had supposed to belong only to experienced London debtors living on their wits, when they know that a tipstaff with a fatal touch is coming swiftly in their wake. The man escaped, and Mrs. Kean and her champion walked wearily on till they reached the sands, which are about five miles distant from Swansea. At this place, Kean endea-

voured to obtain from the occupier of a cottage, a little milk for his wife, who was sinking with fatigue. The churl refused. Kean tendered the few halfpence that he possessed, but these were rejected. He therefore collected some water for her in his hat, and thus humbly refreshed, the poor pair continued to struggle on till evening, when they, at last, set foot in the almost unattainable Swansea ! The cold boiled leg of mutton and cider which they that evening sate down before, in the boat house, and ate with an appetite surpassed only by those who were shut up in the Tower of Famine, existed like a splendid and happy vision in their memories for more than twenty years.

We have extended the account of this journey somewhat beyond what we originally intended, in order that "all our young readers" (as good Mr. Newberry's books say—or used to say) may see how one of the high

and crowned kings of tragedy was accustomed to travel; before they resolve irrevocably to enrol themselves under those ragged and tawdry colours which float above the English Drama—a sign and prophecy of the player's fortunes!

CHAPTER VI.

IN CHERRY'S COMPANY—PLAYS EDGAR—PROCEEDS
TO CARMARTHEN — TO HAVERFORDWEST — TO
WATERFORD, IRELAND—MOTHER GOOSE—A YOUNG
RECRUIT—MR. GRATTAN'S REMINISCENCES—HOLY-
DAY OCCUPATIONS—A REAL MONKEY.

ONCE at Swansea, Kean lost no time in announcing his arrival to Cherry, the manager. The next step was to procure lodgings, which, after some inquiry, he obtained for the sum of eight shillings a week. They consisted of a little tiled parlour and a bedroom; very humble, but clean and quiet. The luxury of rest, after such extreme fatigue as our actor and his wife had undergone, was inexpressibly delightful. They enjoyed it for a day or two, and not a little

happy were they at night, when they lay down to dream (the one of quiet comforts, the other of fame and golden fortune) that the next day they were not compelled to rise with the sun, and toil on, hungry and foot-sore, until evening.

At his first interview with our hero, Cherry's manner was rather stiff. He seemed to think that Kean ought to have intrusted all his difficulties to him, before he entered into the engagement; and he was, reasonably enough, averse to the system of advancing money upon the speculation of an actor's attractive qualities. The cold air of the manager, however, (for he was a good kind of man), soon wore off, and he put up Kean in *Rolla*. Mrs. Cherry, the manager's wife, was Elvira; and Cora, the virgin of the sun, was played by Mrs. Kean, who was within one month of her confinement. The company consisted of the manager, his wife

and daughter (Miss played the heroines), a Mrs. Gunning, and Mr. Woulds, now manager of Swansea. This last named gentleman was a very respectable comedian, and acted in the styles of Liston and Jack Bannister. Kean himself, who was now repaying by five shillings a week his debt to Cherry, performed the leading parts in secondary tragedy, in genteel comedy, and in pantomime. He played *Rolla*, *Reuben Glenroy*, *Daran* in "The Exile," &c., and was upon the whole the pillar and glory of the house of Swansea, until the Bath theatre closed, and then—Bengough came ! The reader who can remember that gentleman (he afterwards came to London, acted at Covent Garden, and finally, we believe, died manager of the Coburg theatre,) will smile to think that the splendour of his performances should have been sufficient to make pale the intense natural brilliancy of Kean. Yet so it was.

Bengough had a big person, a big voice, and a sort of swash-buckler manner, which was magnified by the misty imaginations of the people of Swansea into something actually and intellectually great. He accordingly took the lead, and went through the parts of Leon in "Rule a Wife and have a Wife," Duke Aranza, and others of that stamp, to the satisfaction of all present. He was even profane enough to attempt the personation of Othello and Lear. Indeed, he was for a time the sole "star" of this company; for Kean, during the other's ascendancy, was left to repose. When he did act he endeavoured to act well, and he appears to have always understood his own powers. He would often, on returning from the theatre, assert that he had played finely, and complain that he could get no applause. "You will not find more than five persons in five hundred who understand acting," said he. "I am losing

my time here," he continued, "and I shall never be properly valued, unless I go and have a *fair* trial in London."

On the 13th of September, 1809, Kean's first child (a boy) was born. Three days afterwards Bengough took *Lear* for his benefit, and Kean good-naturedly agreed to play *Edgar* on the occasion. The character was not adapted to his particular powers; he topped the part, however, very cleverly, and showed brilliant points; but Bengough, on his "*Atlantean shoulders*," bore off the whole applause.

After staying about three months at Swansea, Kean and his wife went with Cherry's company to Carmarthen, from Carmarthen to Haverfordwest, and thence crossed over to Waterford, in Ireland. Before we set foot in Ireland, however, we must detain the reader for a moment. At Carmarthen—he will be good enough to go back to Carmarthen—the

manager was desirous of getting up, with the aid of Kean, the renowned pantomime of "Mother Goose." In this drama, one of the principal characters is the Goose itself. It does not demand genius indeed, but it requires that the actor who is to fill it should have made divers experiments in the art of self-suffocation, and have come off triumphant. If he die in the course of his education, it is clear that he will no longer be fit for the goose; but if he survive, his claims to an engagement appear to be irresistible. At Carmarthen there was no goose of experience; Mr. Cherry, not having had courage to bring forward the drama till Kean came to his aid, had not in his company any well-tempered little blade of a boy, who had figured in feathers. It was necessary therefore to look out for a performer. As luck would have it, the landlady of the house in which Kean and his

wife lodged, possessed the requisite urchin. He was small, and had sufficient of the natural goose in his composition not to disgrace the character. It was agreed, therefore, that he should make his debut without loss of time,—Salary (as Mr. Jerrold says) half-a-crown per night. Appearances were now very promising, the mother having signed the contract, and the boy being willing to act. It glanced across the mind of our hero, however, that as neither the boy nor his mother had ever beheld a play, it might be the safer plan to let the future goose see something of theatrical matters beforehand. He therefore stuck him in the orchestra amongst the musicians, and bade him look about him. The boy, wedged in between the fiddlers, whose elbows flew every instant within an inch of his head, and gazing on a set of painted players, who came swaggering forward to the lamps, clutching their daggers, and roaring out their

tremendous fustian full in his face, may be excused perhaps for suffering some alarm. At all events, he *did* suffer ; and when the play was over (for till then he was hemmed in by his enemies), he started off at full speed homewards, threw himself, half out of his mind, into his mother's arms, and cried out, " Oh mother, mother, all the devils from hell have been grinning at me ! " The mother, exulting in the untouched half-crown, endeavoured to soothe him ; she remonstrated, she argued, she intreated ; but in vain. The boy was resolute in abandoning his part ; he cried, he struggled, he hid himself, and betrayed altogether such signs of terror, that his parents were obliged at last to rescind the horrible contract. We are happy to state that Mr. Cherry, the manager, whilst in this dilemma, was fortunately enabled to catch his youngest son, whom he thrust, *nolens volens*, into the goose, and thus the pantomime was at last made perfect.

Kean was the harlequin of the night, having previously acted Richard the Third. The exhaustion, occasioned by the performance of two such parts, can be understood only by actors. Even Kean, with his iron frame and prodigious energies, was incompetent to the task without some strong temporary excitement. This, such as it is, must be his excuse for many deviations from sobriety. From Carmarthen, Cherry and his company went to Haverfordwest, a small place, where Kean never became a favourite, ("he was not tall enough,") and from Haverfordwest they passed over, in the depth of winter, to Waterford, in Ireland.

(1809-10). The residence of Kean at Waterford (where the company remained four months) is chiefly memorable on account of his having formed an acquaintance there with two well-known men of letters. This is not the place to record the merits of those

gentlemen. We are now busy with the history of *Kean*; and the public will not expect to be treated in that history with the authors' notions of all the tragedian's friends. Under other circumstances, we should have had pleasure in showing that we are, like other judicious writers, properly sensible of the talents of two such eminent men as Mr. Grattan and Mr. Sheridan Knowles.

Mr. Grattan has, in *The New Monthly Magazine*, given a pleasant account of his first meeting with Kean. We shall venture to make the following extracts from it.

"I cannot," he commences, "recal exactly the year in which I happened to be stationed in the barracks of Waterford, in the south of Ireland, at that time the head quarters of the regiment in which I was a subaltern. The dates and data of those days have almost all slipped, sand-like, from one end of Time's glass; and it is hard to separate and arrange

them, as they lie confounded in the other. How difficult is it even to remember distinctly what were the pains and what the pleasures of youth! The very mixture of both, and the confusion in which they blended together, were perhaps the causes of their acuteness at the time, as they are of their vagueness now. But there is a certain pursuit, one of the minor enjoyments of life, which has, for me, always preserved its attraction intact. I mean the exercise of fencing. It was my attachment to it, that led to my personal knowledge of Kean.

“In the days I speak of, and long after, I never lost an opportunity of encountering amateurs and professors of ‘the noble science of defence.’ I frequently took up the foils with a little lieutenant of a troop of artillery, which formed part of the Waterford garrison, and few days passed without our measuring blades together.

“I was one evening walking with this brother idler on the public promenade called ‘The *Mall* ;’ and, passing by the theatre, which had been within a day or two occupied by a strolling company, we looked at the play-bill, and found that the performances for that evening consisted of ‘Hamlet,’—the principal character not left out by particular desire,—and some farce, the name and nature of which I forget. We voted the first four acts of the tragedy ‘a bore,’ but agreed to go in for half an hour, at the commencement of the celebrated fencing scene, between Hamlet and Laertes, just to see what sort of affair the strollers would make of it.

“In due time, the door-keeper, to whom we expressed our intention, and who was alive to the importance of two box-ticket takers, came to seek us in a neighbouring billiard-room. He announced the opening of the

fifth act of the play, and we arrived in time to take possession of a very empty stage box."

Hamlet and Laertes, it appears, were in the act of encountering each other.

"We turned our attention," Mr. Grattan proceeds, "to the chief actors in the scene, who stood in position, and prepared for the assault.

"The young man who played Laertes was extremely handsome, and very tall; and a pair of high-heeled boots added so much to his natural stature, that the little pale, thin man, who represented Hamlet, appeared a mere pigmy beside him. Laertes commenced (after slurring, 'for better for worse,' through the usual salute,) to push carte and tierce, which might, as far as the scientific use of the small-sword was concerned, have been as correctly termed cart and horse.

"My companion, who had by no means a

poor opinion of his own skill, and who was rather unmerciful towards the awkwardness of others, laughed outright, and in a manner sufficient to disconcert even an adroit performer. He proposed to me to leave the place, calling out theatrically, 'Hold! enough!'—and I might have agreed, had I not thought I perceived in the Hamlet a quiet gracefulness of manner, while he parried the cut-and-thrust attacks of his adversary, as well as a quick glance of haughty resentment at the uncivil laugh by which they were noticed. When he began to return the lounges *secundum artem*, we were quite taken by surprise, to see the carriage and action of a practised swordsman; and, as he went through the whole performance, we were satisfied that we had, in the phrase of Osrick aforesaid, made

'A hit—a very palpable hit.'

"We immediately inquired of the woman

who filled the nearly sinecure place of money-taker, as to the gentleman whose 'excellence for his weapon' had so pleasantly surprised us. She told us that his name was Kean; that he was an actor of first-rate talent; chief tragic hero (for they were all honourable men) of the company; and also the principal singer, stage-manager, and getter-up of pantomimes, and one of the best harlequins in Wales or the west of England."

Mr. Grattan and his friend contrive to make acquaintance with Kean, who, it seems, taught fencing at this particular period. The impression which the tragedian made, was, it seems, very favourable.

"Nothing could exceed Kean's good conduct and unassuming manners," says Mr. Grattan, "during some weeks that I knew him in this way. Several of the officers of the garrison met him with us on these occasions, and a strong interest was excited for

him. He owed to this cause, I believe, rather than to any just appreciation of his professional merit, a good benefit, and some private kindnesses. But, when I look back to that period, in which his talent was certainly as matured as in two or three years later, I cannot bring myself to believe that he played so well then as when he filled me with such delight on the boards of old Drury. A man of his vigorous genius required excitement to bring it into full play. His bold conceptions and original style must have wanted, even to himself, some stronger test than his own judgment, displayed as they were in the confined sphere of little country theatres. And all that has since been received with such enthusiasm, must then have been considered, at the best, as doubtful and obscure."

We do not quite come into this view of the subject. Kean played "his best," as he often declared, in the provinces; and he

played there, undoubtedly, without that dread of contemporary criticism, which, at the period of his London performances, must, we think, have materially affected his style. That criticism, when it was adverse, must (if it had any effect upon his acting) have impaired its energy; and when favourable, it could scarcely have given to it more spirit than it possessed in those early times, when, full of confidence in his own genius, he flung himself passionately into the part, and wrought out his daring and original conceptions, without apprehension either of critics or spectators.

Kean's occupations at Waterford were not confined to the theatre. Besides "moistening his clay" with the "dew" for which Ireland is so famous, (and he did this with great regularity), he occasionally enjoyed a holiday with some friends. These friends, to say truth, were some gentlemen privates in the Irish militia, who loved tippling almost

as well as the tragedian.- He drank with them, partook of their pastimes, (one of which was putting a skeleton in motion, and frightening people into fits), and went out with them, night after night, scouring the country in search of arms. He made acquaintance also with some of the disaffected Irish (they were "Croppies," if we remember rightly, in those days), and wished to become their leader! And, as a relaxation from these arduous duties and soaring thoughts, he wrote verses, chiefly on pastoral subjects, and composed music, after a fashion of his own. He was altogether ignorant of written music; but he played many tunes by ear, and it was not therefore very difficult for him, trying note after note on the instrument, to produce something like a regular air, and to adapt it to verse. In this way he set "Doubt that the stars are fire," and other small pieces of poetry.

Before quitting Ireland on this visit, he was fortunate enough to clear a considerable sum—almost 40*l.* by his benefit. This was owing in a great degree to the exertions of Mrs. Kean's friends, who resided in the neighbourhood. We should not have troubled the reader by telling him that Kean played *Douglas*, in Mrs. Hannah More's tragedy of "Percy," and also *the Monkey*, in the after-piece of "Perouse," on this occasion, had he not introduced the monkey into his private life. It is a fact, characteristic of the man, that he went home after the play, in his transformed state, and swore, *ore rotundo*, that he would remain thus all night; and he *did*! The remonstrances of his wife, who complained bitterly of the execrable odour arising from the undressed skins (the monkey costume), and from the paint and varnish that encrusted his face, were of no avail. His will was law; and she was driven there-

fore to take her repose on a sofa; whilst the human animal threw himself, skins, paint, varnish and all, into the bed, and remained there during the whole of his benefit night. This appears more than sufficiently wilful and unfeeling; and yet it was on this very night, according to Mr. Grattan, "and in this character," that "he showed agility scarcely surpassed by Mazurier or Gouffe, and touches of deep tragedy in the Monkey's death scene, which made the whole audience shed tears."

(1811). Kean remained in Cherry's company about two years, in the course of which time he went once more to Swansea, and afterwards made a second journey to Waterford. This occurred in the year following his first visit. His reception at Waterford on the second occasion was by no means encouraging. His wild way of life had become known. Debts pressed upon him;

difficulties surrounded him ; and, to get rid of these, he gave an entertainment (songs and recitations) at the Assembly-house, which produced a trifle ; sold some articles of dress, which yielded a little more ; and thus slenderly equipped, he bade farewell to Ireland.

It was during his stay in Waterford, that his only surviving son, the present Mr. Charles Kean, was born.

CHAPTER VII.

MR. AND MRS. KNOWLES—HIS UNPUBLISHED PLAY OF
LEO, OR THE GIPSY.

FIVE and twenty years ago, Mr. Knowles, the now well-known author of "Virginus" and "The Hunchback," was an obscure actor, or rather singer, at Waterford, in Ireland. He and his wife were at that time members of Cherry's company, and it was there that he first became acquainted with Kean. Knowles was even then an author, having, we believe, written various songs and small pieces of poetry. At all events he produced, at this period, a drama, in which Kean filled the principal part. It was called "LEO, or the GIPSY." Never having been published, it would now, if entire, have been an object of

considerable interest. It would have been curious to have seen how the most successful dramatic writer of the day entered upon his literary career. Unluckily, we are not able to show this satisfactorily. We have, indeed, a portion of the play—the three first acts, in our possession (with the permission of the author to print as much of it as we please); but the interest of a play increasing generally in the later acts, it would be unfair to receive our extracts as a true sample of what Mr. Knowles was, even at this time, capable of accomplishing. We forbear entering into any critical eulogiums upon such portions as we adopt in our pages, leaving that agreeable task to the “judicious reader.”

LEO, *or* THE GIPSY.

The *dramatis personæ* consist of a certain *Sir Walter* (a Justice); *Ferdinand*, his supposed son; *Helen*, his niece; and a band of

gipsies, the principal of whom are *Leo* (who loves and is beloved by *Helen*); his friend *Hugo*, who loves the gipsy-girl *Cloe*, but is slighted by her for the sake of *Ferdinand*; and *Cloe* herself. The rest are the gipsy-king, and a set of fellows without mark, but having the significant titles of Long Jack, Merry Tom, Black Robin, &c. &c. &c.

After an introductory scene, wherein Sir Walter drives away one of the old gipsies, who is in the act of approximating to the pantry, *Leo* and his friend *Hugo* are seen. *Cloe*, the gipsy-girl, has, we suppose, just passed across with *Ferdinand*, when *Leo* calls to his companion—

Leo. Thou may'st advance.

Hugo. What's to be done? You see
She takes him towards the wood! My heart's on fire.
I mark'd her looks. Her eye did meet again
As she perused him. On her cheek I saw
Warm blushes pass; and, as she spoke, methought
Her sweet voice sweeter grew! This is the cold

And wishless maid my passion could not win.
Follow me, Leo !

Leo. Hold ! you meditate
Some rash and dreadful thing.

Hugo. Where is't they go ?
Into the close and overhanging shade,
Where none shall list their kisses, or perceive
Their fast embraces twine. Oh ! at the thought
I feel my heart to move within my breast,
As from its seat 'twould leap. I'll murder him !

Leo. I will not let you go.

Hugo. Release me, Leo !

Leo. Then here I break with thee.

Hugo. What dost thou mean ?

Leo. I'll prowl with thee for prey. The roost or fold
I'll rifle with thee ; or the snorting sty ;
Or scale the granary ; or strip the hedge ;
Or what thou wilt beside that lawful is.
Unnatural—for cowards or for friends—
That thou shalt do alone.

Hugo. Well, let it pass.

Leo. Besides, thou wrong'st the girl. She is not one
For wantonness, but coy and well advised.
Doubtless (as in these troubled times we've seen
Before) it is some worsted chief, who seeks
The shelter of our wood, till better chance
Refits him for the fray.

Hugo. No more. To night
What shall we do ?

Leo. Dost thou not think it looks

Bad weather? 'Tis the quarter of the moon—
We'll have some sport to night. The drowsy loons
Will fast their doors betimes, and, heavy from
Their crackling hearths, to their sound slumber hie
Before the tenth hour chime.

The next scene exhibits the gipsy-king encircled by his petty-larceny crew, in the centre of a wood. From his address to them, we gather that he is holding a bed (or bank) of justice.

King. Sons of the woods! Wild living men that
choose
Apart from common civil wights to dwell,
A free and roving tribe, and pitch your house
In shelter'd glen, or under thick bough shade;
Who never feel the sun, nor list the wind,—
Free and familiar with the elements,—
A hardy and a merry living race,—
Your king attends to do you right and favour.
All. Hail to the Gipsy-king!

After this ensue divers accusations and re-criminations between Tom and Robin, and between Jack and Kate, which are intended

to be in the comic vein,—a vein which, we think, Mr. Knowles does not breathe freely. The following is a specimen of how the delicate business of courtship is managed in the woods :—

Jack. Last Whitsun eve, she came and courted me,
As I was standing by the alehouse tap,
With my flowered tankard by me : much she praised
My make, my feature, and my cunning eye ;
And of a thrifty housewife's comfort spoke,
Who by her side a handy helpmate finds ;
Then counted to me, from her worsted purse,
Ten silver shillings and nine sixpences,
Which, with her jack-ass, would her dowry be.
But well I knew her tricks,—so drank my ale.

In the next scene, Leo brings Hugo near to the residence of his mistress, tells him the story of his love for Helen, and places him on the watch. With the exception of a few pretty lines, (one of which,

“ None but the morning bird and I were up,”
reminds one of Richard's, “ Be stirring with

the lark!") there occurs nothing here which illustrates Mr. Knowles's talent. There is a song, however, hereabouts (we cannot, from the mutilated state of the manuscript, say precisely where), which we take the liberty to insert in our history.

I.

The boat had heard the pilot's "hail,"
The oars were ready, and the wind
Was sporting with the loosen'd sail,
That longed to leave the shore behind;
When William press'd the lip again,
That never lover press'd but he—
That never lover press'd till then—
And left his Emma for the sea.

II.

He did not find a watery grave.
Unharm'd he stood the rising gale;
Unharm'd he rode the swelling wave,
And smiling, furl'd his faithful sail.
But him, that winds and waves would spare,
Relentless love no pity bore;
For William's heart was fond as e'er,
But Emma!—Emma lov'd no more.

Sir Walter, apprehensive that his niece may be lured away by the wood-rangers,

“Thou hast been listening to the gipsies here ;
The boy I found thee with, and ancient hag,
Have filled thy thoughts with folly—”

resolves to remove her to a distant part of the country.

Before this is effected, Leo contrives to enter into Helen's chamber, by means of a ladder, and, after a long discussion, prevails on her to elope with him into the wilderness. His eloquence runs after the following pleasant fashion :—

Leo. Fly with me to the woods ! A holy man,
Who loves me as a son, will make us one,
Soon as the morning dawns. I rescued him
From murder once. Fly with me to the woods !
I'll lodge thee in a mossy cabin, sweet
And dry, that in a honey-suckle bower
I've made, among a group of evergreens.
There will be room enough for you and me ;
And we shall lead a life of joy and love.
I'll hunt for thee, and catch thee venison.
I can outbound the deer. I'll bring thee trout

And salmon from the clearest streams, that run
Over bright pebbles and the moss green weed,
And kill thee birds of every quality ;
And thou shalt live as bless'd as love can be."

We are happy in being able to state that
the eloquent lover is successful.

The second act commences with an interview between Leo and Hugo, in which the latter, after reminding Leo that they had always been comrades, sharing alike benefits and privations, and that he, Hugo, had aided Leo in rescuing his bride Helen, demands that the other should render him service in return, by murdering his rival. We give the main part of the scene.

Leo. Now, Hugo, speak !

Hugo. We have been comrades long.
Danger and booty we have shared alike,
Through sunshine, and through rain—through storm
and calm,
Still hand in hand we've gone. In an old tower,
That was the raven's house, we've lodged at night,
Or in the open field together slept,
Under no better pent-house than the hedge,

Or branch of an old solitary tree !

Has it been so or not ?

Leo. It has been so.

Hugo. We've been pursued, and I have kept the
hounds

At bay, while thou hast borne the booty off.

The like upon occasion thou for me

Hast done. No obligation—each alike—

Neither in the other's debt alone, yet both

Indebted. Thus far equal we had gone,

Till—yesternight.

Leo. Well, Hugo ?

Hugo. Yesternight

Thou wert my debtor in so rich a pledge,

As thou hast left but one way to redeem.

Leo. Tell me that way.

Hugo. When thou didst totter and—

(Though at the time, the cry did burst upon us),

Breathless wert forced to set thy burthen down,

Across my neck the lovely prize I swung,

Nor stopped for pale nor hedge, till far behind

I left the faulting pack !

Leo. I own it, and

Would pay thee with my life.

Hugo. Thy life ?—Thy life

I do not ask. Why dost thou turn away ?

Hear me !

Leo. I listen.

Hugo. How should he atone

Who robb'd thee of thy Helen ?

Leo. By his death ;
For Helen's heart is mine.

Hugo. Ay ! Is it so ?
And think'st thou *unrequited* love is nothing ?
A waxen taper's flame, that with a sigh
You may blow out ? By Heaven, the happy fool
That feasts upon the lip he loves, a touch—
A simple touch can only have of that,
Which riots in the slighted lover's breast.
He is the proper subject of the god,
And he alone. His heart—his brain—his nerves
Confess the thrall, and all his frame is fire !
E'en such a one am I.

Leo. What wouldst thou, Hugo ?

Hugo. This morning, when I rose, from restless
sleep,
With troubled dreams, a fever tortured me,
And to the cool and limpid brook I ran,
With parching thirst. Upon the grassy bank
A female lay along. 'Twas Cloe, listless
Of my approach ; her jetty hair untied—
Her bosom loosely hid, and labouring
With sighs, that, as she heaved them, thicker seemed
To grow. Transfixed I stood, and gazed, until
Her lips began to move. Oh ! then I heard
A sound that all my sense suspended, and
The current stopp'd of my impetuous blood.
It was *his* name she murmured. Had I then
A weapon in my reach, the sweetest lips
That ever quivered with the sigh of love,
I would have closed.

He then proceeds to invite Leo to murder Ferdinand. Leo declines this pleasant proposal ; but the other, threatening to betray the secret of Helen's retreat to her pursuers, Leo is obliged to give a seeming consent to undertake the murder, and tracks Ferdinand accordingly into the forest. The rest of the act is consumed by some dialogue between the inferior gipsies ; after which Helen encounters Cloe, and they together go in search of Leo, now the husband of the former. In the meantime Leo entices Ferdinand into the recesses of the forest, explains to him the jealousy and bloody intentions of his comrade Hugo, and breaks to him his intention of saving him, if he will give up Cloe to his friend. This condition is rejected ; notwithstanding which, Leo in the end agrees to convey his intended victim to a place of security, and to bring the gipsy girl to him, in order that their marriage may be solemn-

ised. The account which the hero of the piece gives of the place of refuge will bear extracting.

Leo. Down in a glen an ancient ruin lies.
It was an abbey once, with spacious aisles—
With cells and chambers, and long passages
Winding about, and opening here and there,—
Some on the floor, and others under-ground,
With ivy, now, within and out o'ergrown.
Its roofless walls wild briars, and shrubs, and weeds
Inhabit. In the pelting rain may come!
The wind unhindered through its chambers go,
And aught, that fancies it, pass in and out
Without a question! I will take you there,
And in a place unknown to mortal, save
Myself, bestow thee."

Another gipsy scene succeeds; in which Long Jack, who was to have married his comrade Kate, excuses himself to his two friends (Tom and Robin) for the non-performance of the wedding, explaining that Kate, with the best intentions, had set out for church, but that an unexpected impediment had occurred.

Within a hundred yards of church,
By the way-side a white-washed dwelling stood,
With glasses, shrivelled lemons, painted jugs,
And flower-pots looking through the window panes,
And on a poplar tree, before the door,
Upon a board, a painted pot of ale,
The froth as white as chalk.

These attractions are too much for the intended bride, who, stepping into the "white-washed dwelling" above mentioned, very speedily found herself incompetent to attend to any other concerns during that day. The marriage seems to be postponed *sine die*. And here the manuscript stops! The last part of the third act, and the whole of the fourth and fifth acts, are, we believe, irrecoverably lost.

The drama of "Leo" was performed with great success at Waterford. Kean played the principal character with such effect, and so entirely to his own satisfaction, that, when he

came to London in 1814, he wished to make his *debut* in "Leo," at Drury-lane. Luckily (for *him*) the play could not be found ; and he therefore burst upon the town, as everybody knows, in the character of Shylock.

The success of this play of Mr. Knowles inflamed Kean's ambition. He too felt a desire to become an author—"an Arcadian ;" and, accordingly, without loss of time, he set to work, and manufactured a little after-piece, in two acts, with songs, &c., which was presented to the manager, acted for our tragedian's benefit (on his second visit to Waterford), and—very speedily forgotten. We conclude that he set some value upon it, as he transmitted it *by post*, to Miss Tidswell, who was then in London. It formed, with its large loose writing, its obliterations, its amendments, and its stout covers, a packet of very formidable appearance. Miss Tidswell,

to whom it was presented, accompanied by a demand of several pounds sterling (?) for postage, rejected it without ceremony. Since that time it has not been heard of; and we believe that the very name of it is lost.

CHAPTER VIII.

KEAN'S WANDERINGS—THE DRAMA AT DUMFRIES—
YORK—A RARE DANCING MASTER—ARRIVAL IN
LONDON—COLD RECEPTIONS—SEES JOHN KEMBLE
—ACTS AT WEYMOUTH—PROCEEDS TO EXETER—
A QUARREL AT THE RED LION—A JUMP THROUGH
A GLASS DOOR—A TEST FOR SILVER.

ON leaving Ireland and Cherry's company, Kean once more threw himself upon the world, and became a wanderer on his own account. His first experiment on the public taste was made at Whitehaven, to which place he crossed over with his family. When he arrived there, he had no money, no engagement, no acquaintance, and no reasonable expectation of any sort. He tried recitations, his usual remedy in desperate cases. These failed ; and he was obliged to part

with divers articles of dress, in order to obtain food for himself and his children.

From Whitehaven he proceeded to Dumfries, where he had acted as a boy, when belonging to a strolling company. To accomplish this journey, he sold a variety of things (dress, theatrical ornaments, &c.), and with the produce hired a little taxed cart, in which he, his wife, their two children, and the owner of the aforesaid cart, jogged on to Dumfries. At that time our tragedian had a dog called Daran, so named after the black hero in "The Exile." Daran was a fine fellow, who trotted merrily by the side of the family carriage, and killed sheep by the way. In case the provident reader should be desirous of knowing at what expense he may transfer his family, after the before-mentioned fashion, from Whitehaven to Dumfries, be it known that it will cost him four pounds. If he have a dog like Daran, indeed, who can

provide mutton for his family, he may, perhaps, do it for less. For Kean, it is proper to observe, did not use his four-footed friend as a purveyor. Whatever the hunter Daran killed, he consumed or left.

The wonderful ploughman, Burns, has cast a glory around Dumfries. The city is naturally proud of it. We do not know that it did anything to accelerate Burns's fame, or to enlarge his physical comforts whilst alive. But its posthumous acknowledgments of the poet's merits are ample. Towards our poor tragedian, Dumfries certainly did not exhibit any very liberal patronage. He arrived there without money, took refuge in a poor public-house, hired a room, and announced, in the usual attractive style, his intention to give exhibitions of singing and recitations. We do not know what might have been his expectations from the gratitude or admiration of the people of Dumfries, before whom he

had played repeatedly some few years previously ; but, whatever they were, they were very speedily converted into certainty. The night for his performance arrived. The entrance-money (he had an eye to the national character) was *sixpence* ! Sixpence ! Let the reader pause upon the sum ; and then let him know that there was in the house—how much ? Twenty pounds ? Ten ? Five ? One ? Ten shillings, perhaps ? Or—we must cut the matter short—there was *Sixpence* in the house ! There was one person in Dumfries bold enough to part with sixpence to hear the first tragedian of his time recite the beautiful words of Shakspeare. How we should like to know the name of that ONE, (the Great Unknown of Dumfries !) in order that we might celebrate his liberal spirit with due honour !

These disappointments compelled our hero to dispose of some books belonging to his

wife, and more of his and her clothes. The whole produced two pounds; and with this sum he went forwards to Annan, and from Annan to Carlisle, where he wrote to Mrs. Kean (who had been left at Dumfries), directing her to join him. The sale of a few more useful articles enabled her to set out, without much delay, for the capital of Cumberland.

At Carlisle—"merry Carlisle," as it used to be called—Mrs. Kean arrived at night, with her children, and found her way to a little public-house, where her husband had taken up his quarters. His conduct, previously to her arrival, had not tended to smooth her reception. The landlord, in answer to the clamours of the children for food, said that he had nothing to give them; for that Kean, amongst other enormities, had been running into his debt already. Kean, who was absent from the inn when his wife arrived, now returned, and was enabled to

conquer the hunger of the family ; but still affairs wore a gloomy aspect. At last, it occurred to the wanderers, that the fact of the assizes having thrown a large quantity of lawyers into the city, might be turned to their advantage. Kean, accordingly, addressed a letter to the barristers, proposing to recite, to sing, &c. &c., and to leave his reward to their generosity. The answer was, that they did not want to hear anything of the sort. Our learned friends, accustomed to sharpen their wits with the rust of Levinz and Comberbach, did not choose to run the risk of becoming dullards by listening to the puerile fancies of Shakspeare. In this extremity, the landlord (the hard-hearted Boniface, whom we have already referred to,) advised our hero to hire a large room at a venture, and to announce his recitations. Kean took the advice, wrote out his bills (which he always did, to save the

expense of printing), and despatched his usual herald, the bellman, with them round the city. The result was fortunate. The people of Carlisle did not shut their purses so closely as the Dumfries economists. They came to the recitations, and luckily in sufficient quantities to enable the tragedian to pay his expenses, and to obliterate the long line of chalk scores which stood against his name in the little parlour of "the public."

After leaving Carlisle, our adventurers visited Appleby, Penrith, (where their finances compelled them to part with the mutton-eating Daran,) Richmond, in Yorkshire, and various other places, and at last found themselves—utterly destitute—at York. It is needless to repeat the every-day wants and troubles which the poor actor and his family, day after day, encountered in this and other peregrinations. Their long journeys, in all weathers,—their arrivals, weary and foot-

sore, at the squalid public-houses where they put up,—their scanty meals,—their visits to the pawnbroker and the Jew,—their hopeless appeals to the public taste,—the cries of the children (from fatigue or want of food),—the tears of the woman, and the curses of the man,—all these, fifty times repeated, would make but an unprofitable and tedious history. We content ourselves with giving a few facts, illustrative of our hero's forlorn condition; without exhibiting, at every turn, the poverty and wretchedness of his course. At York, as we have said, he arrived, utterly destitute. So extreme was his need, that he wished to enlist as a common soldier, and actually presented himself, for that purpose, to an officer attached to a regiment at York, who very goodnaturedly dissuaded him from his design. He was, perhaps, as desperate of attaining the objects of his ambition, at this particular time, as at any period of his

chequered life. And with his despair, his wife's despondency naturally kept pace. She saw no hope of extricating her infants from the load of misery and want which oppressed them. More than once, she has knelt down by the side of her bed, in which the two half-famished children lay, and prayed that they and herself might at once be released from their sufferings. Happily, they were relieved by the intervention of a friend. The wife of a Mr. Nokes (then a dancing-master at York), heard of their extreme distress, and went with a heart brimful of benevolence to their aid. She was shown up to the room where Mrs. Kean and the children were, and after having ascertained the truth of the report concerning their condition, she spoke kindly to them all, put something in Mrs. Kean's hand, wished her good morning, and left the house. On her departure, Mrs. Kean opened the paper which this excellent

woman had left, and discovered that she had given her a *Five pound* bank note! She threw herself on her knees, and fainted. They had been rescued from absolute starvation.

Mrs. Nokes's kindness did not stop here. She interested her husband on behalf of her *protégés*; and he (who seems to have deserved such a wife,) lent Kean the room in which he received his pupils. An impediment, indeed, was unexpectedly thrown in the way of this kind act, by Nokes's landlord, (a person of the name of Flower, a clergyman,) who said that "no theatrical people should have the room;" but this was finally surmounted by the independent spirit of Nokes. He resolved that Kean *should* have the use of the room, and accordingly the tragedian had it, gave his recitations in it, and cleared 9*l.* by his exertions. Before we leave York for London, the next stage in

our hero's journey, let us consecrate one sentence to the memory of this excellent pair. The active benevolence of the wife, and the kindness and resolute spirit of the husband, ought never to be forgotten. We wish that our history were immortal for their sakes.

A long and weary journey, made partly on foot, partly by provincial carts, or by the common waggons, brought our travellers within five miles of London. "Now," said Kean, "we will walk the remainder alone." It was a word and a blow with him. He dismounted; sent forward the children in the waggon, under the care of some person who undertook to take care of them, and set off with his wife on their five miles' walk. A misgiving came over her heart, she says. Could he mean to *lose* her two little boys?—By no means: matters were not so bad. With all his faults, our player never at-

tempted to act the character of the bad uncle in "The Children in the Wood." The whole party arrived safely in town. In Oxford Street, Kean and his wife held a consultation. He said that he did not know where to go, nor where to send the children. "I have an aunt," said he, "a Mrs. Price; perhaps she will take us in;" and they tried aunt Price accordingly. When they arrived at her lodgings (which were in a small street near Monmouth Street), she happened to be from home. They entered, therefore, and on her return, in half an hour or so, the mantua-maker found her nephew, his wife, (who was personally unknown to her), and their two children, in undisputed possession of her territory. It is our painful duty to state, that aunt Price's reception of the travellers barely approached the resemblance of hospitality. She admitted them, however, and gave them shelter for a week; at the

expiration of which time, they made an incursion into the premises of Miss Tidswell, in Tavistock Street, Covent Garden, with evident intentions of gaining a settlement in her parish. That lady was very prompt in her measures; for after allowing them to remain in her apartments for an hour, they were compelled to sound a retreat, and to regain their position in aunt Price's dwelling.

At this time, Jack Hughes—the reader will remember the magnificent benefit at Gloucester, where Kean and Jack Hughes came forward, hand in hand, like the Siamese twins, and *unlike* them, returned the entrance money to the spectators,—well, Hughes at this time was master and manager of Sadler's Wells, and also of the Exeter theatre; and Kean resolved to become one of Jack's company. He applied, and was at once engaged to "act every thing" at Exeter, at two pounds per week. This was the

largest salary he had ever yet received. A little money which the new manager advanced, put our travellers in the way of reaching the west of England. Before they left London, however, Kean took his wife to the theatre, to see Mr. Kemble and Mrs. Siddons act Cardinal Wolsey and Queen Katherine. They were highly delighted—particularly with Mrs. Siddons's performance. On their return home at night, Kean started up and imitated John Kemble to the life. His wife was enchanted. She declared that it was "quite as good as Mr. Kemble." Her husband dropping his mimicry, said, "Shall I ever walk these boards? I will," he continued, energetically,—“and make a hit.”

Kean, attached to the Exeter corps, was directed to join it at Weymouth, where the company was then performing. He obeyed, set off, and got as far as Dorchester, at which place he paid his last three shillings for the

breakfasts of himself and family. After this desperate piece of expense, he put his wife and children into a coach, and mounted the coach-box, saying carelessly, that he would tell the driver, "in coachman's slang," that they had no money, and that all would be right. We conclude that this curious experiment succeeded, since the party arrived at Weymouth without accident. Mr. Henry Hughes, Jack Hughes's son, advanced our hero two pounds upon account of his salary, and procured lodgings for him. Kean opened in *Romeo*—contrary to his own inclination—he did not like the part at any time), and afterwards ran through a variety of characters, of every shade, until the Weymouth season closed, and the company proceeded to their head quarters. At Exeter, he opened in *Octavian*, and played successively Shylock, Richard, Othello, and other first-rate parts. In these, he delighted

the critics ; but he did not attract the multitude. That honour was reserved for Harlequin. Nothing else would fill the house. This chequered character, with his wand, his brown cap, his black head, and his singular costume (a glorification of the tartan!), appears to operate as a magnet in country places. When Othello is deserted, and even Romeo's love-making fails, the hero of pantomime is sure to bring a crowd. Old mothers, who frown carefully upon the soft scenes of Juliet—daughters who are cold to their rustic lovers—are drawn irresistibly towards *him*. He is the conqueror of all hearts, the beau ideal of all imaginations, except of the few who choose to waste their leisure in the troublesome employment of thinking. Accordingly, our tragedian frequently played Harlequin in the provinces. When he was first put up for this important part at Exeter, he proved to be really too ill to act. He was a

Harlequin of such reputation, that although another person of some pretensions undertook the part, the house manifested their disappointment loudly. At last he got better, and was able to act. The announcement was made with pride. The manager (who paid him five shillings per night *extra*) distributed handsome placards, on which were written in vast letters—"MR. KEAN will RESUME the character of HARLEQUIN THIS EVENING." Crowds ran to witness the performance. Kean did credit to his fame, and delighted everybody. And when all was over, and the good people of Devon were trudging home to their quiet hearths, full of the pantomimic wonders that they had witnessed, our hero, with a great coat flung over his patch-work dress, and bathed in perspiration, took his customary seat at "The Red Lion," with his brother toppers, and drank strong liquors till morning.

At Exeter, Kean rented some convenient rooms over a china-shop. Miss Hake, a little feather-dresser, was his landlady. Her tenants were the china-man, Kean, and Mr. Cawsey, a solicitor. These persons ruled over three parts of the house; the fourth being under the jurisdiction of Miss Hake and her sister. These two ladies, besides being very little, were very precise. Had they supposed Kean capable of the sin of tippling, even in a modest degree, he would never have been a lodger over the china-shop. But they let their rooms to him in one of his sober intervals, and the wild animal was in their quiet country before they were aware. At first, all went on smoothly. He continued to drink, indeed, but his draughts were swallowed at the Red Lion; and he never returned home until long after the Misses Hake were in bed. It seemed as though the halcyon had taken their second

floor, and had brought tranquillity in his train. A single night was destined to dispel this charming fancy ! Kean had been acting with spirit, as it turned out, and drinking with equal vigour, when a fellow, unaware of the foibles of actors, disputed the propriety of his performance. Our hero, who was not a man to receive a reproof silently, whether merited or not, retorted in unequivocal language. The critic replied in terms bitterer than before. This brought on a rejoinder ; and thus they went on, from bad to worse, waging a fierce battle with their tongues, until Kean, who thought that words were poor things in a case of this sort, started up, intimated that he was going for his swords, and swore that his foe (now beginning to be terrified) should fight him. He left the room accordingly, and ran to his lodgings for the weapons, having on his Harlequin costume. Whether it was that a portion of his excite-

ment evaporated by the way, or that it took a pantomimic turn, we do not know, but on his arrival at home, he seemed more inclined to commit a few minor extravagances, than the great one of killing his adversary for a foolish speech. He mounted the door-steps, entered the house (the door was not fastened), ran up the stairs, and without ceremony jumped, Harlequin-fashion, right through a glass-door at the top. It was now three o'clock in the morning, and the smashing of the glass made a tremendous noise. Mrs. Kean (who had been sitting up for him) was alarmed; Mr. Cawsey, the Solicitor, was alarmed; both the little Misses Hake were very much alarmed. Our hero recovered himself, just as Mr. Cawsey, in his night-cap, was putting his head out of his bed-room door. In another instant, Mrs. Kean appeared; and shortly afterwards, scarcely visible in the imperfect light, peeped forth the two little Misses Hake, in their

night-dresses, trembling with all their might. Fronting them all, and gazing stedfastly at Mr. Cawsey, who cautiously advanced, stood the tipsy Harlequin. That personage now threw himself into a position, set his arms a-kimbo, began rolling his black head round and round—quick—quicker—quicker still—they thought that it never would stop. At last, making a sudden spring towards Cawsey, he “cleared” the Solicitor (night-cap and all) at a bound, and disappeared like a ghost !

We do not wonder that little Miss Hake, unacquainted as she was with the transits of Harlequins, should imagine that our hero had gone off in a flash of sulphur. What Cawsey, with his extinguished candle, surmised, touching the character of his black-visaged visiter, we do not presume to guess. All, however, was cleared up by Mrs. Kean’s confessions in the morning, when the victims of this mad frolic regained their composure, and moral-

ised (somewhat too much at length) on the heinousness of the offence. As to Kean himself, notwithstanding the entreaties of his wife (who followed him to his room, after his exploit), he insisted upon having "his swords," seized them, after a struggle, with the air of a conqueror, and went off once more to the Red Lion, with a renewed desire for vengeance.

During the three following days, he was neither seen nor heard of, by his wife or family. At the expiration of that time, he returned, saying that he had "been doing a noble action." One is naturally inquisitive about noble actions. Even his wife, although she was ill in bed, betrayed some curiosity on the point; he whereupon informed her (gravely) that he had been drinking for three days with a poor actor, who was about to leave Exeter, in order "to keep up his spirits." In regard to his adversary at the Red Lion, he

said that "the fellow was a coward," and had fled. His swords, therefore, were happily unstained, and in good condition, and as fit for contesting the English or Scotch crown, with the Earl of Richmond or the Thane of Fife, as formerly. His quarrel excited in him ~~no~~ disgust towards his ~~old friend~~, the Red Lion. His ~~visits~~ there were, as frequent as ever. In fact, there seems to have been some mysterious attraction in the place—(could it be the liquor?) It was the great place of resort for all the actors. Amongst the rest, one man, of the name of Middleton, was never satisfied that his five-and-twenty shillings (which he received weekly, in silver) were good, until he had tried their metal at the Red Lion. Twenty-five sixpences, and as many glasses of gin and water, were the *change* that Mr. Middleton regularly received in return for his weekly salary. How he tested the quality of the sixpences, or whether or not

his scepticism extended to them, we are not competent to say.

The professional course of our hero, during this sojourn at Exeter, was as full of variety as his heart could have wished. He played the leading characters in tragedy; he played Harlequin; he played the musical part of *Count Belino*, in "The Devil's Bridge;" he played the *Prince*, in "Cinderella;" he taught *Cinderella* herself to dance; he instructed the whole *corps de ballet*! His reputation in the Terpsichorean art was so great, that the proprietor of an Exeter paper (who was also a bookseller) suggested that he should take a room for the purpose of teaching dancing, and promised to send his own sons there. Kean declined this, but offered to give the boys the required instructions. "All I shall ask in return," said he, "is an old Latin dictionary which I saw in your shop." The bargain was struck, and the

young booksellers (there were five of them !) came to Kean's lodgings, and stamped away before him every evening ; he singing during the performance, but otherwise paying little attention to the improvement of his pupils. He was rewarded in the end with the Latin dictionary, with which he busied himself for a long time afterwards, culling words and phrases from it, and using and misusing them upon every occasion. He was as proud of his little incursions into the classical country, as an Oxford or Cambridge professor.

Previously to his leaving Exeter, however, we ought to state that he took a benefit (this was on the 20th of April, 1812), and played *Luke*, in " *Riches* ;" *William*, in " *The Sailor's Return* ;" and *Frederick, Baron Willinghurst*, in " *Of Age to-morrow*." It appears that, in the course of the second piece, there was " A treble hornpipe by

Mr. Kean, Miss Quantrell, and Mr. Johnston;" and that "tickets were to be had of Mr. Kean, at Miss Hake's, feather-maker, No. 211, High-street."

We hope that the little landlady has, by this time, "feathered her nest" to her own entire satisfaction.

CHAPTER IX.

ATTRACTIONS OF GUERNSEY—A REBEL IN THE PLAY-
HOUSE—BRIXHAM—A SECOND VISIT TO EXETER—
AN UNPOPULAR ACTOR—MASTER BETTY AGAIN—
TEIGNMOUTH—PROPOSALS FROM THE OLYMPIC—
DISTANT PROSPECT OF A THEATRE ROYAL—BARN-
STAPLE—A WALK TO DORCHESTER—DOMESTIC
TROUBLES—INTERVIEW WITH MR. ARNOLD—EN-
GAGEMENT WITH DRURY LANE THEATRE—HIS
SON'S DEATH—DEPARTURE FOR LONDON.

(1812.) THE next scene in our hero's
changeable life lies in the island of Guernsey.
He went to this place, with the rest of
Hughes's company, about the early part of
May, 1812. Mrs. Kean followed shortly
afterwards; and, on landing, was accosted
by the tragedian, who was in tip-toe spirits,
with—"My dear Mary, what do you think?
I can get brandy here for eighteen-pence a

bottle! I can drink it instead of beer."—
Who would not live in Guernsey!

Whilst he was on the island, he played his usual round of tragic characters, and as usual was very much admired. And, as in Exeter he was invited to give young gentlemen instructions in dancing, so in Guernsey he was requested to polish their intellects by giving them readings in Shakspeare. These "arduous duties," (to use the phrase of gentlemen who do their work by deputy,) were not to be kept up by water. Accordingly, our hero appealed to the Guernsey brandy "at eighteen-pence a bottle," for support. Sometimes that which was intended merely for support, turned out to be too strong for the purpose, and overturned the tragedian's faculties. And in this vanquished condition he was seen by various of the sober-living people of the island. Now in Guernsey, as in other places, they do not

like to see a man continually giving way before the bottle. If he is to "crack" one every day, it should be literally rather than metaphorically. In short, they began to consider him little better than a sot. In the country, the moral character is a part of one's subsistence: a man cannot thrive there, unless it be good. It points which way he goes. The ring and sound of it is heard everywhere. It is his true sign of distinction—his shadow, without which he would be lost, like the unhappy Peter Schlemil. Kean discovered this on his benefit night, when the Guernsey folks, taking umbrage at his excesses, avoided the theatre. Notwithstanding his great talents, he fell into disgrace with the people; and, to make his situation complete, he quarrelled with the manager also. The officers of the garrison had "commanded" a play, and Hughes put up "Charles the First," and sent the principal

part to Kean. As it happened, Kean liked neither the part nor the play, and resolved not to act in it. Having formed his resolution, he fortified himself with courage to act up to it. In a word, he appealed once more to his friend the brandy. It was true liquor, and did not desert him; and when the night for performance arrived, and our hero was requested to attend, he returned, in very pithy terms, a flat refusal. Hughes waited, and waited, and personally endeavoured to induce him to play; but the only reply that he obtained from the tragedian was in the shape of a billet, which announced that "King Charles had been beheaded on his way to the theatre, and therefore it was impossible that he could appear." Mr. Hughes,—who, in his imagination, heard the stampings, the knockings with sticks, the whistlings, the chorus of hisses, which generally indicate the impatience of an audience,—resented our hero's

wit, and issued strict orders that Mr. Kean should not be admitted into any part of the house. Having done this, his anger was somewhat assuaged; and he sat down to manufacture "an apology," the particulars of which have not reached us, (we suppose, however, that it ran in the approved terms—"Mr. Kean's medical advisers," &c. &c.) and prepared to read the part himself. Kean, however, although he had a mortal aversion to *act* the part of Charles, had no objection to witness the representation of it. Indeed, he was a little curious to see how they would supply his place. Accordingly, as soon as the hour for drawing up the curtain had struck, he marched boldly to the theatre. Remorse for his desertion—misgivings as to his admission—were altogether out of the question. He walked triumphantly up to the stage-door, knocked authoritatively, and was—civilly desired to depart. It was a

civility which he did not understand. He remonstrated—he argued—he threatened: when, finding all of no avail, he proceeded to force a passage after the most approved method of arms. Not to weary the reader with the particulars of the conflict, it is sufficient to say that he eventually attained a seat in the slips, or upper boxes, and sate down very merrily to laugh at the tragedy. He constituted himself the *Tiers-état*. Hughes, the manager—it should be stated here that Hughes, although an excellent fellow, was but an indifferent actor—Hughes was reading his part (the part of Charles) very innocently, and even with some little enthusiasm, when suddenly he heard the voice of his own deserter, shouting out—“Bravo, Hughes!” Hughes’s pleasure was damped: he went on with less confidence; but he was again getting warm in the part, when the cursed voice cried out once more—

"Well done, my boy!" Poor Hughes now stood aghast. He did not know what to do. He did not know to what extremities his refractory actor, "flown with insolence and wine," would proceed. That personage, however, soon put an end to his doubts, by an open declaration of war. He laughed, he talked, he sang, he roared at the agonies of Charles (doubly martyred), and altogether became intolerable either to actors or audience. The players were offended that they could not be heard spoiling their parts: the audience pronounced him a nuisance, and resolved that he should be abated. Every five minutes the anger of each of these parties increased. Our hero enjoyed the tumult: he laughed prodigiously at the indignation of his opponents, and returned their menaces with spirit. But he was fated to sink at last. Remonstrances having had no effect—hisses and shouts, and cries of "Throw him over!" having failed—

the constables, those promoters of good order, were called in, and finally turned the scale. The deserter made a stout resistance, indeed, but the guardians of the public peace were too numerous, and prevailed. They ejected him by force from the theatre, and forced him to seek refuge in his own house. In addition to the disgrace of a defeat, the tragedian was, very properly, mulcted of a fortnight's salary, which converted his brandy (for the next fourteen days), if not into the simple element, at least into brandy and water.

After a stay of some months in Guernsey, Hughes and his company prepared to pass over to Weymouth. Kean was invited to accompany them; but he was implacable. To be vanquished and fined at a blow, was too much for his proud spirit. The body of the company, therefore, departed, whilst the head remained behind. It was an un-

lucky time for our hero to show his anger, since his indulging in it was at his own expense. With the manager departed the tragedian's salary, which he could then ill spare. He was again pressed by creditors, and again without a penny in his pocket. To supply his wants, he resorted to his old means of giving singing and recitations, which, under the patronage of the officers of the garrison (they had relented, we suppose), answered so well, that he was enabled to pay his debts, and to quit Guernsey with credit. In fact, he realised the respectable sum of six pounds by his entertainment ; its main attraction, however, being the performance of his eldest boy, Howard, who appears to have been a child of exceeding promise.

A little dirty vessel, laden with skins, conveyed the player and his family to Devonshire. They landed at a small town near Exeter (Brixham is the name, we believe),

and announced recitations, &c., again. This time there was a complete failure. Not a single person came. Brixham proved worse by sixpence than the penurious Dumfries. Leaving their trunk of clothes, therefore, at the inn, as a security for the bill, and putting their children, and a woman whom they had hired, into a cart, Kean and his wife set forward to try their luck once more in the ancient city of Exeter.

(1813.) At Exeter they arrived late at night, and, after some difficulty, prevailed on their former landlady, Miss Hake, to admit them. They did not occupy their old lodgings for any great length of time, nor, indeed, did they remain long at Exeter. Kean, however, on the 1st of March, 1813, played *Shylock*, and the 1st *Savage*, in "Nautical Heroism," an afterpiece founded on an adventure of Commodore Byron in the Straits of Magellan; and for his benefit he acted *Cato*, and had a good house. On his return home,

after personating the Roman stoic, his wife asked him how he had played. His reply was—"Pretty well. I was not John Kemble, you know." This benefit, according to the bills of the night, was under the patronage of — Buller, Esq. Yet, when Mr. Buller's butler came to Kean's residence, saying—"You will have a good house, for *MY Master* patronises the play," our hero vowed that he would not sell a ticket. "If the people won't come and see *my* acting," said he, "it shan't be said that they came and patronised me by Mr. Buller's desire." Alas! our friend did not then know "the people."

Independently of his acting in regular companies, he also (for we presume this must have happened after the company had left Exeter) exhibited, with his son Howard, at the hotel, near the church-yard; the proprietor of which, at that time, was Mr. Foote, father of the pretty Countess of Harrington. Kean was now, however, decidedly out of

favour with all his old friends. Mr. Nation, a gentleman of Exeter, who had formerly patronised him, did not seem desirous of renewing the acquaintance; Miss Hake, the little maker of feathers, plumed herself no longer on her courtesy. The humbler patrons and admirers, of both sexes, whose names and merits have been scratched out of the record by that dull clerk, Oblivion—all appeared willing to forget that our tragedian had ever existed. He resolved to try other regions—

“There is a world elsewhere.”

He wrote to Dublin, but received no answer: he wrote to Edinburgh: he wrote to Mr. John Kemble, for a *third* line of business, and received no answer! He offered to teach fencing—to teach dancing: but no one would become his pupil. At last, Mr. Fisher engaged him to act for four nights at the Teignmouth Theatre, and laid the foundation of his fortunes.

Before going to Teignmouth, we ought to state that Kean, about this time, was once more pressed to play (second) with Master Betty: he was then acting at Weymouth. The play being fixed upon, the manager tendered the inferior part to Kean. It was rejected *instantly*. He appealed to the tragedian's feelings—to the “cause of the drama;” but the tragedian was marble. Failing in these attempts, the master of the troop put up the tragedy without more ceremony, according to his own cast, and awaited the result of his experiment. Our hero adopted his ancient remedy;—he ran away. He had not played “The First Savage” in vain. It enabled him to take to the woods, and dine once more with the squirrels. He was absent—invisible—for a couple of days. When he returned, which he took care should be “the day *after* the fair,” he was found in front of the theatre, stalking up and down in a more

than tragic fury. His brow was stormy; his hands were in his pockets; and he himself was employed in swearing bitterly at managers, and plays, and Fortune! After some persuasion, he was enticed home, where—his thunder melting into rain—he burst into a passion of tears, and recovered. It was a long time, however, before he forgot the indignity; for he was “a good hater.”

A short time before this event (or afterwards, for our annals here are a little wanting in precision), he was engaged to act with Mrs. Jordan. In fact, he did play *Don Felix*, in “The Wonder,” to her *Violante*, and *Frank Heartall*, in “The Soldier’s Daughter,” to her *Widow Cheerly*. That he acquitted himself very indifferently on both these occasions is undeniable, for he drank deep and forgot his parts; but it is not true, as has been reported, that our great comic actress played the Fury—we suppose to his

Orestes—and scolded him with a vigour that deserves immortal mention. She was simply displeased with him, because his conduct marred the effect of her own good acting ; but nothing further. After this, Kean never again came in collision, as an actor, either with Mr. Betty or with Mrs. Jordan.

Let us now proceed to Teignmouth. During Kean's second residence at Exeter, he received an offer from Mr. Fisher, the Teignmouth manager, and eventually agreed to play four nights at his theatre. His finances being in their usual state, he started for Teignmouth alone, leaving Mrs. Kean and their two children at Exeter, with directions for her to open and answer any letter that might arrive in his absence. An opportunity speedily occurred ; for a day or two after he had commenced his new engagement, a letter arrived from Mr. Elliston, then manager of the Olympic theatre, in London. It contained

a tender of three pounds per week for the tragedian's services, part of which were to consist in being acting manager of the Olympic. Mrs. Kean, knowing only that her husband was eager to play in London, and being ignorant of all distinctions between its theatres, instantly closed with Elliston's proposal. It was a golden bait, and she clutched it greedily. From five-and-twenty or thirty shillings to three pounds per week was a triumphant step. She was proud of being able to carry such news to her husband, and when, a few days afterwards, she received a note from him, desiring her to repair to Teignmouth with his son Howard, she was impatient till she could deliver the brilliant tidings of the new engagement. To her surprise, the tragedian received the news with a torrent of reproaches. He wished to have an opportunity of exhibiting his talents in London, it is true, but not at one of the minor

theatres; Covent Garden and Drury Lane were the temples of fame towards which his ambition pointed, and he swore, in grand terms, that he would never perform in London on humbler boards.

He proceeded however to complete his agreement with Fisher, and rehearsed and afterwards acted *Rolla* for his benefit. After the play ("*Pizarro*") there was "*Chiron and Achilles*," in which piece his son Howard performed, and the entertainments closed with a pantomime, in which Kean sustained his old character of Harlequin. He played throughout effectively, and cleared about fourteen pounds, as his share of the house. This was an evening pregnant with great consequences; for among other persons who contributed to fill the theatre were Dr. Drury (once head master of Harrow school) and his lady. They were exceedingly struck with Kean's talents; and when Mrs. Drury came

the next day to pay for the box which they had occupied, she intimated to Mrs. Kean that she hoped some good might arise from their visit to the theatre; for that Dr. Drury was to dine that day with General St. Leger, to meet Mr. Pascoe Grenfell, one of the committee of Drury Lane theatre. Mrs. Drury, went on to say that her husband meant to speak of Kean as he deserved, and to try whether or not he could obtain for him an engagement in London.

The Olympic engagement, if so it might be called, was now doubly obnoxious. In proportion as Kean's hopes of appearing at Drury Lane arose, his indignation towards all relating to the Olympic increased. It was the cause of numberless domestic disputes; in the midst of which came a letter from Dr. Drury, announcing that from his representation of Kean's talents, Mr. Pascoe Grenfell had recommended him to Mr.

Whitbread as an actor likely to do service to the theatre ; that Mr. Whitbread had written instantly to Dr. Drury, requesting that Kean would repair to London, where some trial parts should be given to him. This was delightful ; but unhappily our hero had no money to help him on to the metropolis, and he had moreover two new engagements on his hands, with the Barnstaple and Dorchester managers. He therefore wrote to Dr. Drury his thanks, stating how his time was forestalled, and adding that if he should have a successful benefit, he would obey Mr. Whitbread's direction, and immediately proceed to London.

It was at this time that Howard, the little boy whom we have more than once adverted to, fell ill. The whooping-cough attacked him ; and Kean, who in general was but little disturbed by the tender emotions, was sincerely grieved. He was compelled to go through

his labours; but he sent for his wife and children, in order that they might be near him. They repaired to Barnstaple, and were received and treated with great kindness by the manager. Kean's salary here was two pounds per week. He made a short stay at the place, however, for the theatre was small and badly attended. It was necessary to live, and to get money for the London expedition; and he therefore proceeded to Dorchester.

Kean's improvidence has been the theme of many a tongue, but few of his acts exceed the absurdity of his starting for Dorchester *in a post-chaise*, without funds sufficient to carry himself and his family one quarter of the way. They set off indeed in the post-chaise, and accomplished the first stage of their journey; but an accurate survey of their exchequer being then made, it was found necessary that Mrs. Kean and the eldest child, Howard, whose illness was

increasing, should proceed in the coach, and that Kean himself, with his youngest son *on his back*, should trudge forward on foot. It was not the first time that he had acted the foot traveller, but it was the first time that he had carried double. A stout heart, however, and a dozen merry companions, all members of the same company, vanquished many of the evils of the way. They set forward cheerfully, and performed more than half their task that day. At night, they stopped at a humble inn on the road side, where Kean fed the child, and put him to bed (in his clothes); and in the morning, forgetting the oriental custom of ablution, took him forwards in his original Barnstaple dust. One or two of the actors relieved our hero from his child-burthen occasionally, particularly a good-natured comedian of the name of Clifford, who several years afterwards was introduced by the (then celebrated

actor) Kean to his son, as the gentleman who had carried him in his infancy on this memorable journey. About noon on the second day, Mrs. Kean, who, with her boy Howard, was on the look-out for her husband's arrival, beheld the regiment of strollers approaching the town. They came in by twos and threes, hot, dusty, tired, and with beards that, except in colour, would have done honour to the chin of Abomelique, the rear being brought up by Kean himself, with the child delighted and crowing upon his back. Mrs. Kean, whose maternal eye beheld in an instant the child's hat and great coat utterly spoiled, began lamenting the demolition of his finery; but she was quickly stopped by the tragedian, who told her in brief terms, "to be thankful that he had brought him home at all."

The theatre at Dorchester was, by a degree,

worse than that of Barnstaple. There was less business, and a small salary; and to crown the general distress and anxiety of the time, the little sick boy Howard became an idiot. The violence of his cough occasioned, it was said, water in the brain, and he was evidently in imminent danger. The poor actor, however, has no time for mourning. He must work in order to earn his morning's meal: he must dance, and sing, and make merry, and repeat the old jests, and laugh and make others laugh, during the season of his despair. Kean was obliged to play as usual. One night, after having dressed for his part at home, he threw a large cloak over his theatrical attire, and took his way gloomily to the play-house. He was to act *Octavian* in "The Mountaineers," and "a Savage" in some farce—*Kankoo*, it is believed, in "Perrouse." Mrs. Kean remained at home. She was employed, nursing their sick child in the

only little room they had, when, about midnight, she heard a quick step approaching the door. Suddenly Kean himself entered: he was in a state of extreme agitation, and could scarcely speak. At last, he made an effort and cried out, "My fortune is made! my fortune is made!" His eye at that moment falling on his suffering child, he qualified his exultation. "Let but Howard live," said he, in a gentler voice, "and we shall all be happy yet." To Mrs. Kean's inquiries as to what had caused all this tumult, he replied nearly to the following effect. [The events of this night had such a prodigious effect upon the fortunes of himself and his family, that almost every particular (many of which would else have been, at this distance of time, indistinct) remains clear and unforgotten.]

"When the curtain drew up," Kean began, "I saw a wretched house. A few people in

the pit and gallery, and three persons in the boxes, showed the quantity of attraction that we possessed. In the stage-box, however, there was a gentleman who appeared to understand acting. He was very attentive to the performance. Seeing this, I was determined to play my best. The strange man did not applaud; but his looks told me that he was pleased. After the play, I went to the dress-room," [this was under the stage] "to change my dress for the 'Savage,' so that I could hear every word that was said over-head. I heard a gentleman (who I supposed was the gentleman of the stage-box) ask Lee the name of the performer who played the principal character. 'Oh!' answered Lee, 'his name is Kean—a wonderful clever fellow; a great little man. He's going to London. He has got an engagement from Mr. Whitbread;—a great man, Sir.' 'Indeed!' replied the gentle-

man, 'I am glad to hear it. He is certainly very clever; but he is very small.' 'His mind is large: no matter for his height,' returned Lee to this. By this time, I was dressed for the 'Savage,' and I therefore mounted up to the stage. The gentleman bowed to me, and complimented me slightly upon my play, observing, 'Your manager says that you are engaged for London?' 'I am offered a trial,' said I, 'and if I succeed, I understand that I am to be engaged.' 'Well,' said the gentleman, 'will you breakfast with me in the morning? I am at the —— hotel. I shall be glad to speak to you. My name is Arnold; I am the—*Manager of Drury Lane theatre.*' I staggered as if I had been shot. My acting in 'the Savage' was done for. However, I stumbled through the part, and—here I am."

After finishing his story, he could think and talk of nothing but the approaching

interview with the London manager. Morning arrived, and Kean (after dressing himself "as respectably as he could," says our information) repaired to the hotel to breakfast. He was received graciously, and after some conversation as to his experience on the stage, his cast of characters, &c., &c. (which occupied the intervals of the meal), he was finally engaged by Mr. Arnold on behalf of Drury Lane theatre, for a term of three years, at a salary of eight, nine, and ten pounds per week, for each successive year; and he was to have six "trial parts." In two hours from the time of his leaving home, he returned to his wife with the above information. He seemed half out of his senses with delight. He had been well received and well entertained, and had now touched the summit of his ambition. "Mr. Arnold," observed Kean to his wife, "certainly regretted that I was not half a head taller. 'With your fine

Italian face,' said he, 'your fortune would be made.' "

Joy is communicative, and Kean had no desire to keep his good fortune to himself. One of the first persons made acquainted with it was Dr. Drury, to whom he was so much indebted. The following letter, addressed to that gentleman soon after the morning interview with Mr. Arnold, exhibits not only our hero's gratitude to his correspondent, but also the benefits which he had derived from Ainsworth's Dictionary, his acquisition of which we have already mentioned. It is surely a curiosity.

"Dorchester, Nov. 21, 1813.

"Sir,

"I have again and again read your instructive letter, and have each time received additional pleasure from the perusal. Be assured, sir, I shall treasure the admoni-

tions it contains *memoria in æterna*; the *verbum* from you is alone sufficient to create a *sapientia* in the object that may have been insensible before. The interview between Mr. Arnold and myself has already passed; that gentleman has honoured me with a visit in Dorchester, the result of which I feel will be as satisfactory to you as liberal and exalted to me. I have competence for *three years* as a *certainty*; but if my talents should in London be favoured by that distinguished approbation they have provincially been rewarded with, every compensation * shall be made, independent of the present engagement. I have not yet received an answer from Mr. Whitbread, and should conceive Mr. Arnold's introduction of himself has rendered it unnecessary. I certainly, sir, with submission to your judgment, should

* This appears to be unintelligible.

be proud to avail myself of the opportunity of paying my devoirs to Mr. Grenfell. Such services I think should be paid by every mark of attention and respect. You have, sir, opened a path of happiness to me, so sudden, so unexpected, that I can scarcely think it but a dream. *Ita ad hoc ætatis a pueritia fui, ut omnes labores periculo consueta habeam.* You have dispelled those clouds and difficulties, and the event, I trust, shall render me deserving of such exalted friendship. In the name of my family, once more I beg you to receive our heartfelt thanks, and believe me, sir, with every deference to your opinions, strict observation to your precepts and example, and continued feelings of gratitude,

“ I am, dear sir,

“ Yours sincerely,

“ E. KEAN.”

“ DR. DRURY.”

Two days after writing this letter, his poor little boy Howard died. It is worth observing, how much more eloquently he writes under the influence of sincere grief, than when prompted only by the desire of displaying his imperfect erudition. Let the reader compare the following brief communication with the gaudy half-naturalised rhetoric of the former letter.

“*November 25, 1813.*

“The joy I felt three days since at my flattering prospects of future prosperity, is now obliterated by the unexpected loss of my child. Howard, sir, died on Monday morning last. You may conceive my feelings, and pardon the brevity of my letter.

“Mr. Arnold saw me play *Alexander* and *Octavian*. This heart-rending event must delay me longer in Dorchester than I intended. Immediately I reach London, I

will again, and I hope with more fortitude, address you. In the midst of my affliction I remember your kindness, and,

“With the greatest respect,

“Sign myself yours, &c.

“E. KEAN.”

“DR. DRURY.”

The death of his eldest-born appears to have wounded Kean very painfully. The child died at eight o'clock in the morning. The father was affected to a degree bordering on suffocation. His passions were at all times uncontrollable, and upon the present occasion, after some few attempts to think that all was for the best, he flew out of doors in an agony of grief, and drank to a prodigious extent “in order to forget his loss.” The brandy, however, instead of soothing or stupifying him, made him mad. He returned to his house in an outrageous state, (his grief

still uppermost,) wept and lamented the child, and swore that he would wake it from the dead. At last, exhausted by his anguish, and affected of course by the liquor which he had drank, he fell into a hot and uneasy sleep. In the morning he was more composed.

In the midst of all this sorrow, he was obliged to proceed with his theatrical engagement at Dorchester. Indeed it was necessary to do so, in order to entitle himself to a benefit, by which means alone he could hope to pay for his child's funeral, and the medical expenses which had been incurred before its death. He took his benefit, therefore, and derived from it sufficient for these purposes. But he was still without money for his London journey. The manager of Drury Lane theatre had not tendered him any, not being aware, of course, of his exigencies. In this dilemma, the Dorchester

manager, Mr. Lee, very good-naturedly advanced him five pounds, and with part of this sum in his pocket (for a portion was necessarily left with his wife, who remained in the country), he set forward with a beating heart to try his fortune on the metropolitan stage.

NOTES TO VOLUME I.

NOTE A. (p. 8.)

KEAN was born in Gray's Inn, and not in Ewer street ; but the circumstances related in the following letter, which we transcribe from a newspaper, wear the look of truth :—

“ Sir—The biographers of Kean have never yet given a correct account of his early life, which is very singular, as the materials for this part of his history could have been collected with such apparent facility, and at the same time would have afforded to his admirers some curious circumstances in the great tragedian's life. Kean, then, sir, was brought up, and I believe born, in a very humble tenement, now belonging to the writer of this, at No. 61, Ewer-street, St. Saviour, Southwark ; and so wretchedly off was poor Kean, with his sister Phœbe Carey, and his mother Mrs. Carey, that even to this day they are talked about by the old inhabitants who remember the family. Mrs. Carey (who died about the time of Kean), with her daughter Phœbe Carey, and Kean, gained their precarious livelihood by frequenting the fairs with the itinerant showmen, and I believe Richardson numbered the Kean family (as he says he has done many of the ‘reglars’ of the present day) in his *dramatis personæ*. Kean, when grown up, with

his mother and sister Phoebe (what has become of Phoebe Carey?) left Ewer-street and commenced strolling, playing Harlequin or any other character, which business is sometimes termed by theatricals the "sawdust line." Thus was Kean engaged, when by accident he emerged from his native poverty and obscurity, and became the first man of his day! Kean's early habits never forsook him—his imprudence most likely shortened his days. It is supposed that Kean received a liberal education, as he frequently made classical quotations; this was not the fact. His parent, Mrs. Carey (no one recollects Kean's father), could not frequently purchase a quartern loaf, and of course could not pay for a quarter of Latin; therefore the knowledge he attained must have been the result of his riper years, and of his extraordinary talent or application. Kean owed very little to his parents but his birth. An anecdote is told of him characteristic of the man:—An old friend invited Kean to dine with him, and, to give Kean a treat, promised him a baked shoulder of mutton, and potatoes under. Kean was punctual to time, and was seen at the window anxiously waiting for the servant, who was sent to the baker's for the dinner. Kean, when the girl returned, heard her mistress direct the meat to be removed from the baking-pan to a dish; he instantly flew to the top of the kitchen stairs, and calling aloud, begged that the mutton might not be moved from the brown pan, but that potatoes and all should be brought and served up as they came from the oven. Kean was used to this method when a lad, and had never forgotten

the savoury relish which the brown pan and its delicious contents afforded him in his boyish days.

“J. W.

“Long Room, Customs, Dec. 7.”

NOTE B. (p. 49.)

We cannot vouch for the correctness of the next extract, but it has been given in print, and may be true. The reader will judge for himself. We are not acquainted with the language of the Houyhnhnms, but we imagined it to have been of a purer cast. It is possible, however, that the education of palfreys brought into London at a tender age, is too often neglected in the material parts, and sacrificed to the trivial accomplishments of music and dancing (in the ring).

“We recollect,” the writer says, “once hearing Davies, the former manager of Astley’s Amphitheatre, describe the occasion upon which he first saw Kean; and as the circumstances cannot be more impressively related than in his own graphic detail, we shall content ourselves with transcribing his words from our note-book :—

“‘I was passing down Great Surrey-street one morning, when, just as I came to the place where the Riding-house now stands, at the corner of the ‘Syleum, or Mag-dallen, as they calls it, I seed Master Saunders a-packing up his traps. His booth, you see, had been there standing for some three or four days, or thereabouts; and on the boards in front of the painting—the *prosseniom*, as the painters says—I seed a slim young chap with marks of paint—and bad paint it was, for all the world like raddle on the jaw of a sheep—on his

face, a-tying up some of the canvass wot the wonderfulls't carakters and curosties of that 'ere exhibition was painted upon. And so, when I had shook hands with Master Saunders, and all that 'ere, he turns him right round to the young chap wot had just throwed a summerset behind his back, and says, 'I say, you bloody Mister King Dick, if you don't mind wot you're arter, and pack up that 'ere wan pretty tight and nimble, we shan't be off afore to-morrow, so we shan't; and so, you mind your eye, my lad.' That ere 'bloody Mister King Dick,' as Master Saunders called him, was young Kean, wot's now your great Mister Kean."

NOTE C. (p. 35.)

The following statement is said to have been derived from the mouth of Old Richardson, the manager of the company in which Kean passed a portion of his youth:—

Windsor fair commenced on a Friday, and after all our impediments we arrived safe, and lost no time in erecting our booth. We opened with *Tom Thumb* and the *Magic Oak*. To my great astonishment, I received a note from the Castle, commanding *Master Carey* to recite several passages from different plays before his Majesty, King George the Third, at the Palace. I was highly gratified by the receipt of the above note; but I was equally perplexed to comply with the *commands* of the king. The letter came to me on Saturday night; and as *Master Carey's* wardrobe was very scanty, it was necessary to add to it before he could appear in the presence of royalty. My purse was nearly empty, and to

increase my dilemma, all shops belonging to Jews were shut, and the only chance we had left was their being open on the Sunday morning. Among the Jews, however, at last, we purchased a smart little jacket, trowsers, and body linen; we tied the collar of his shirt through the button-holes with a piece of black ribbon; and, when dressed in his new apparel, Master Carey appeared a smart little fellow, and fit to exhibit his talents before any monarch in the world. The king was highly delighted with Edmund, and so were his nobles. Two hours were occupied in recitations; and his abilities were so conspicuous to every person present, that he was pronounced an astonishing boy, and a lad of great promise. The present he received for his performance was rather small, being only two guineas, though, upon the whole, it turned out fortunate for the family. The principal conversation in Windsor for a few days, at that time, was about the talents displayed by Master *Carey* before the king. His mother, therefore, took advantage of the circumstance, and immediately engaged the market-hall for three nights, for the recitations of *Edmund*. This was an excellent speculation, and the hall overflowed with company every night. Mrs. *Carey* joined me on the following Monday at Ewell fair; and all the family, owing to their great success, came so nicely dressed, that I scarcely knew them. Mrs. *Carey* and her children did not quit my standard during the summer.

“ After a short period, I again got my company together, and with hired horses I went to Waltham Abbey. I took a small theatre in that town, the rent

of which I paid fifteen shillings per week. It was all the money too much. My company I considered very strong, consisting of Mr. Vaughan, Mr. Thwaites, Master Edmund, his mother, and the whole of his family, Mr. Saville Fawcett, Mr. Grosette, Mr. and Mrs. Jefferies, Mr. Reed, Mrs. Wells, and several other performers, who are now engaged at the different theatres in the kingdom. Notwithstanding we acted the most popular pieces, the best night produced only nine shillings and sixpence. Starvation stared us in the face, and our situation was so truly pitiable, that the magistrate of the town, out of compassion to our misfortunes, 'bespoke a night.' "

NOTE D. (p. 127.)

" Kean had a strong perception of his own powers, and always predicted that he should some day be at the head of his profession. He was a beautiful fencer. His friends wished him to establish a fencing academy. His answer was—' It shall never be said, sir, that I was a fencing-master.' I persuaded him to teach me the noble art as a friend, but he would take no remuneration. He came to us one day in the greatest possible spirits.—' My fortune,' said he, ' is made. Lord Cork has bespoken Othello ; we know his reputation as a critic, and I will not lose the opportunity.' The next day we saw him again.—' Well, Kean, what success ? ' —' Do not name it, sir ; I am miserable. Whilst I was playing the finest parts of Othello, and in my best style, my Lord Cork's children were playing at hot

cockles in front of the box, and Lord and Lady C. laughing at them.' [*Anonymous communication.*]

NOTE E. p. 188.

"Betty came as a star to Weymouth, whilst I was there. Kean would not play second parts to him; and I remember one evening meeting him in a drizzling rain on my return from the theatre. He had been wandering about the whole night, unable to endure the mortification he experienced. I reasoned with him, but it was in vain; "I must feel deeply, sir. He commands overflowing houses; I play to empty benches. I know my powers are superior to his." To please us he studied the part of *Zanga*, and played it for his benefit. The farce was a pantomime called *The Judgment of Paris*, in which he played harlequin. He was much puzzled to dress *Zanga*. We provided for him the brass claw of a large mahogany table, which was fastened to a clouded calimanco robe; and made an admirable representation of a tiger's skin and foot. He took the part of *Zanga* for his second benefit after his appearance in London. I was unable, from the excessive crowd to get within sight of the stage, but hearing a tremendous shout of applause, I asked if it was not caused by the words, "*Then lose her.*" I was right; I had not lost the effect those words had produced upon me from the night I had heard them at Weymouth." [*Same.*]

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

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